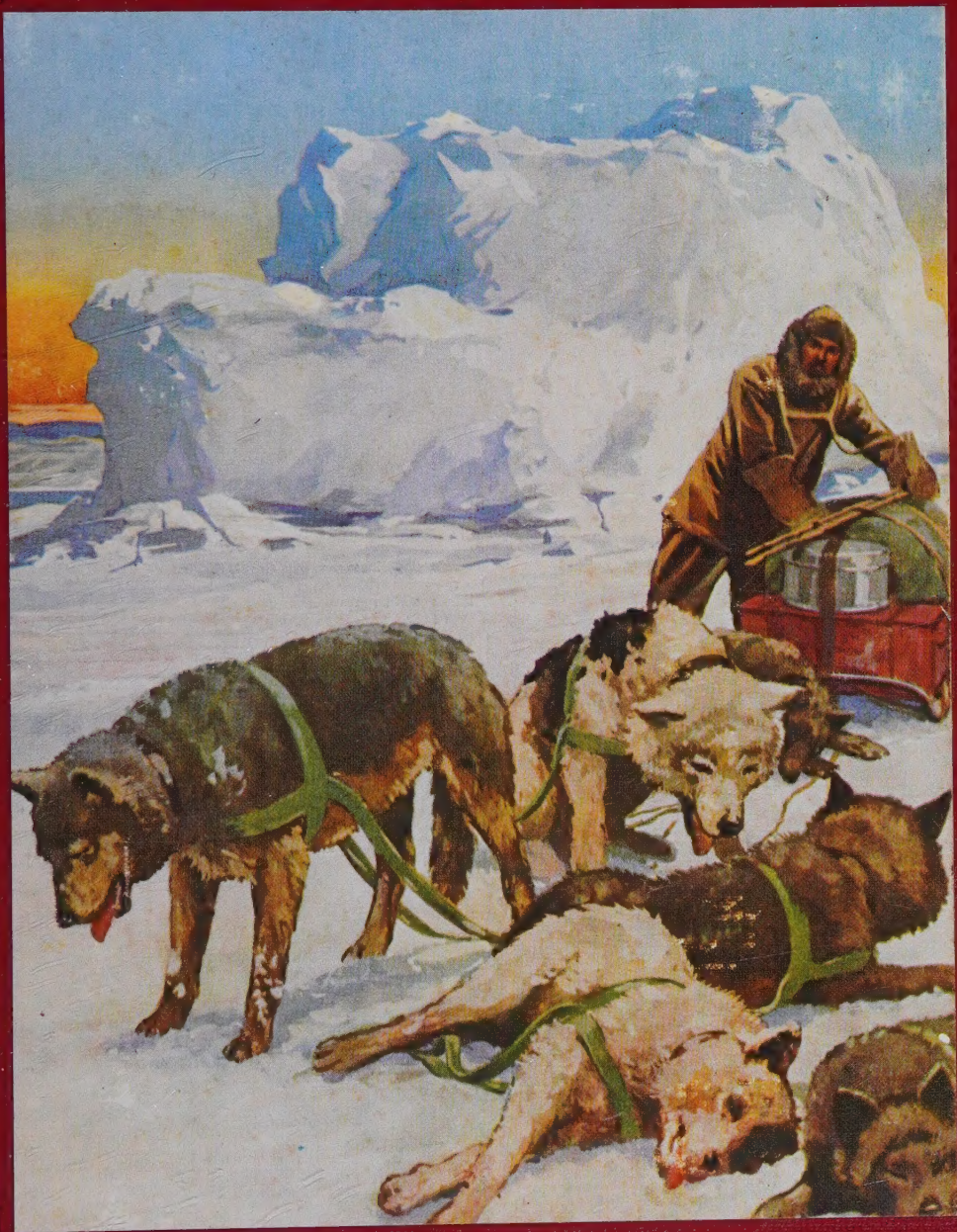


# SEPPALA













SEPPALA  
ALASKAN DOG DRIVER



LEONHARD SEPPALA



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## ALASKAN DOG DRIVER

*By*  
ELIZABETH M. RICKER



*With Illustrations*

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## FOREWORD

THE prologue of *Seppala : Alaskan Dog Driver* is told in story form by the writer and is based directly on the facts and circumstances of the subject's youth before he came "South to 53°." His early life among the hardy Norsemen of fifty years ago creates a picturesque and fitting background for his experiences later in the pioneer days of the Gold Rush. The story of his colorful career as a miner and later as "King of the Alaskan Trail" is in Seppala's own words. It was told by him from time to time as the occasion recalled incidents to his mind, and was set down by the writer.

Leonhard Seppala is not a "has been." He lives to-day imbued with the same enthusiasm and indomitable courage which have brought to a modest, unassuming character fame and admiration at home and abroad. With skill and endless patience he has raised and trained the finest string of dogs in Alaska, and with the dog power thus produced he has been a vital factor in linking the outlying posts together and making possible the development of the Seward Peninsula. The freighting of supplies for the Alaska Railroad, the transportation of engineers — these together with his daring exploits on errands of mercy have made him a distinctive figure in the development of Alaska.

From his beginning as an immigrant miner, Seppala's road to success has lain uphill. His greatest disappointment occurred late in life when his wonder dog, Togo, became crippled after the drive to bring the diphtheria serum to Nome. To add insult to injury, one of his freight dogs, Balto, whom Seppala considered unfit for use in the drive, was taken from his kennels after he himself had left, driven by another man, and made a canine hero, while Togo was forgotten. This driver and dog, because they brought the serum on its last relay to Nome, were given all the credit, although their fifty-three miles of hardship were little compared with the three hundred and forty miles endured by Togo and his team mates. No doubt it was against his better judgment that Balto's driver was persuaded into giving an incorrect impression; yet Seppala has chosen to remain silent on the subject. In the following pages the true story of the Serum Drive is revealed, as it should have been long ago in all fairness to a thorough sportsman, and to a dog whose grit, willingness, and devotion to his driver were unfaltering.

E. M. R.



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## PROLOGUE



## I

### THE FISHERMAN

A YOUNG blacksmith sat at the doorway of his father's shop gathering up stray bits of scrap iron and tossing them against the house temptingly near the many-paned windows glinting in the morning sun. Now and then he stopped to look out over the fjord, considering the hundreds of white sails dotting the harbor, and listening to the screaming sea gulls and the chatter of the ptarmigans. But the game was more fascinating, and squinting up his eye he shot the little bits of ammunition nearer the prismatic glass. He moved closer, taking careful aim, and at last an extra large piece struck one of the panes and sent it splintering.

As he sat there considering the possibility of retreat he felt rather than saw the black shadow of Isak, his father, filling the doorway behind him. He squirmed around to confirm his suspicions, and as he did so his eyes traveled from the heavy boots up the tall figure. His father had never seemed so big, as he stood in the doorway, still and terrible, his arms braced against the framework.

Leonhard searched this way and that for a loophole of escape. There was but one way, and the boy took it. He darted under the bridge of his father's legs and made a dash for the blacksmith shop.

At the forge a man stood welding a huge ship anchor. Pieces of the anchor were on the anvil and men were striking the red-hot iron with heavy sledges. As the young blacksmith scurried past the anvil a flake of the hot iron flew from it and struck him squarely at the nape of his small brown neck. With a cry of pain he fell to the floor. The men dropped their sledges and gathered around him.

Isak thrust them away and knelt by the huddled figure, discipline forgotten. With a mighty jerk he pulled at his skin apron, breaking the straps by which it was held in place around his neck, and spread it out on the floor. Then with his great hands he lifted the limp body and turned it over until his eyes rested upon the ugly burn, with the hot iron deeply embedded in the flesh.

For once Isak knew utter helplessness. A cold sweat poured from his body and he who had always been the Island's great man felt sick and weak as a woman. It required his last bit of strength to raise himself with the child's body in his arms, and he felt as if his feet had turned to lead as he trudged towards the house with his precious burden.

"Go for the doctor, Torstein," he called over his shoulder, and he was frightened by the sound of his own voice.

As he went into the house Ane got up from the loom where she was weaving cloth.

"What has happened?" she cried, running to her husband, who, white and trembling, had placed the boy on the little wooden bed tucked close up against the wall.

Isak dropped into a chair and told the story of the accident, while Ane, with the clear head and sure fingers of

the countrywoman in a crisis, began undressing the child and cutting away the clothing around the burn. She put water on to boil for the doctor when he should come, and from the polished cupboard in the corner she brought a dram of whiskey for Isak.

The minutes dragged. At the sound of footsteps on the walk outside Isak rushed to the door, and as he led the doctor to the bed where the child lay, still unconscious, he poured out the story for the second time. While the physician worked, Isak paced alternately to the bedside and then across to the window, where he stood looking out over the fjord.

He saw the island of Arnøy basking like a huge sleeping animal, drawing to its bosom the smaller islands clustering close around as if for protection. To the south of the little hamlet of Skjervøy his eyes rested on the Kaagen glacier tucked into the hollow of the mountain, white in some places, and in others blue with shadows against the massive gray rock. Down below was the lake into which the ever-receding glacier broke in lumps of ice. The moss-like vegetation formed around the glacier colored the water a strange light green.

Out in the harbor Isak's boat, the Leviathan, was riding at anchor. It had been a wedding present from his father-in-law when he married Ane, having been built by him the year Ane was born, and at that time was the largest in the neighborhood, and the pride of the old man's heart. On the day of Ane's wedding its ownership ceremoniously changed hands, and it was the most precious gift the old man could have bestowed upon his son-in-law. In that



part of Norway a man's boat was his fortune, during the long winter days in the fishing grounds.

Isak, gazing at the tarred hull resting at ease on the peaceful waters of the fjord, thought of the plans he had made for the day Leonhard would go with him to Finmarken to the fishing grounds, and the joy of teaching him to take a man's place on the Leviathan when he himself should relinquish his place to his son.

Through the moments of anguish Ane went from one end of the room to the other, helping with deft fingers and quickly complying with the doctor's requests. It seemed to Isak that his presence was utterly useless — and so it was, for it was not brute force that was needed now, and the strength of his forty summers at the forge was as nothing beside Ane's calm, efficient handling. His thoughts were suddenly called back again as he realized that the gray-bearded doctor stood beside him, laying a consoling hand on his arm.

"Come now, Isak, pull yourself together. It is a nasty burn, but he is a fine strong lad, and in a few days he will be up and around, causing as much mischief as ever."

The words of comfort brought tears to the stalwart man's eyes.

"I will look in on him again to-night, and meantime you will be more useful if you go back to the shop. You can rely on Ane; you could find no finer nurse." He looked at Ane, allowing his thoughts to turn towards the woman for whom he had always nursed a secret adoration. When Isak had married Ane he had danced at the wedding and wished them both well. No one ever knew that Isak

had taken from him the woman he had always hoped would be his. But Isak had been a good husband and a good father. He had prospered at the fishing grounds and at his forge. He was the big man of the Island, and his opinion was always sought in the affairs of the community and its administration. He had the gift of vision, and he spent many a long evening smoking in front of the big iron stove, seeing in the smoke curling up from his pipe imaginary pictures of the day when the tide should be harnessed industrially. In his mind's eye he built great brick chimneys which would stand guard over a prosperous community. He had already been awarded a contract to build the big smokestack for the cod liver refinery, and his heart swelled with pride as he thought of it. Now he looked further into the days to come, when not one but many chimneys should belch forth clouds of smoke, when Skjervoy should be the centre of the cod liver oil and herring refinery business of Northern Europe.

The doctor took his leave and Isak returned to the forge. In spite of the words of encouragement, the sledge felt heavier and the hours dragged. At intervals through the long day he found himself turning again and again to the bedside of his oldest son. But it was true what the doctor had said: Leonhard was strong and healthy, and it was not long before he was well enough to be out again. But for the time being no more scraps of iron were thrown against the windowpanes.

During the days of his convalescence Leonhard contented himself with building harpoons, of a gun-shaped bow-and-arrow design. A little trigger would release the

cord of the bow, sending the arrow on its way. On the tip of the arrow he fastened pointed pieces of broken glass to give the weapon the necessary sharpness. When the harpoon was completed he would steal down to the beach and in a little boat would drift on the water until a small dolphin appeared, blowing and diving. Then the whale hunt was on! No spoils were ever brought in, but the pastime was a romantic and adventurous one, and in the child's mind he was already the head man of his own boat. The sun beating down on the fjord fell also on the wound, healing it gradually day by day until there was no pain left, only an ugly scar to mark the young blacksmith's initiation to the anvil and the forge.

Later, as the days grew shorter and the sun sank lower in the heavens, Leonhard and his companion, Linken, built ships on the sand out of piles of boxes and barrels. Masts were rigged and anchors and chains attached which clanged and rattled as the captain shouted his orders. Linken was two years Leonhard's senior, and was therefore the self-appointed captain, while Leonhard as engineer sat curled up in the largest box in the middle of the ship and beat on the sides to make the noise of the engine more realistic.

Gradually, as the size of the boat increased, the crew was also increased. Sigurd, Leonhard's younger brother, applied for the position of cook, but because of his few years was refused the privilege. Sometimes the crew mutinied, and Leonhard would fight to make himself captain in place of Linken. Though Linken was the senior, he was not the fighter that his young engineer proved to be, and after



the captain's face had been rubbed in the dirt a new election took place.

Leonhard inherited his father's ideas of smokestacks and chimneys, so the new engineer was put to work building a smokestack. When this was done Captain Leonhard gave orders for smoke to be produced, which was accomplished by touching a match to dry straw and tar. The reality of the smoke was a source of great rejoicing for the entire crew, who by turns sat in the various box cabins or ran out to see the black smoke curling upwards from their funnel. It was not long before the captain heard loud coughing and choking from the cabins and shouts for help issuing from Linken in the engine-room box. The captain from his place on the bridge, breathing the cool salt breeze blowing in over the fjord, scoffed at his subordinate officer and only took greater pride in watching the ever-increasing black smoke rise skyward from the stack.

At last the cries from below grew into wild hysterical shrieks. The captain went below, determined once more to bury Linken's face in the sand, when he saw that the ship was actually ablaze below. Linken had tried to get out, but had become so confused in the suffocating smoke that he had fallen helpless in one of the eight cabin boxes, where he lay shrieking. The other boys who comprised the ship's crew stood looking on with terror on their faces.

Leonhard jumped down into the smoke, calling to his younger brother Sigurd as he did so: "Sigurd, run to the shop and tell them to come quickly." Sigurd, the slow-moving, for once ran for all that was in him, while Leonhard groped his way in the choking fumes, the imaginary

but faithful captain of a very real crew in a very real disaster.

As the men from the shop came running to the little wreck the entire after portion was enveloped in clouds of smoke, and from the burning boxes Leonhard emerged, pulling and dragging the now unconscious engineer of the strange craft. The whole ship burned to a mass of charred ruins, but it marked an epoch in Leonhard's career. Small as he was for his eleven summers, from that time on he was the little captain of the Island, and as years went on he never lost his supremacy.

That night as the family sat around the big pine table Isak's eyes rested upon his son. The episode of the day filled his heart with a new pride in his boy. He looked into the future. In his place at the forge he saw the young blacksmith fashioning fine strong things of iron, tin, and copper. He saw him as the master when he himself should be an old man ready to lay down his burden.

That night when Ane, as was her custom, drew off Isak's heavy boots, he spoke of Leonhard — not of what he planned or of what was in his heart, nor in any way to reveal the thoughts behind his words, but sternly, as a father considering the future of his son, and his voice was without sentiment as he spoke.

"Ane, a few more years at school and I believe Leonhard should go with me to Finmarken. Next summer he must come into the shop and learn to pull the bellows. It is high time he was doing something useful."

Ane looked up, and her gaze met only that of the staunch disciplinarian.

"He is only eleven, Isak. Is he not too young to begin a man's job?"

"No; he is young, but he is strong. He is not too young to start to learn his trade."

Ane went on with her task, but her heart sank. It was not easy for her to think of this son of hers on the sea in winter. Already she saw his child's hands reddened and numbed with cold in frozen mittens, suffering the hardships of the fisherman's life, and its perils. And now she would have the fear of watchful waiting for son as well as husband.

No one knows the anguish and the heartache of the lonely, bleak winter better than the wife of the fisherman, when the west wind of the blizzard blows in from the open sea, swooping down over the mountains and through the hollows and descending with terrific ferocity on the little village — when it sweeps the small boats from their moorings, swirling them out to sea to be crushed against the rocks, and threatens to tear loose the houses from their very foundations. Such is the fury of the icy blizzard in the Arctic, and in the dark when the wind screams by the corners of the house, and the spray, driven from the waves in the seething fjord, freezes on the windowpanes, the fishermen's wives hear weird sounds in the shriek of the gusts and strange figures loom before their eyes. They sing as they gather their children around them, trying to drown the death knell of the pounding waves and the shrieking wind. They busy themselves at their looms, weaving homespun for their men, carding the wool, or knitting it into mittens and stockings for the children and



those in Finmarken. Ever the busy hands go on, and with every click of the needles and into every stitch there goes the silent prayer for those far off in the fishing grounds.

Ane lived through this again as she slipped into the great pine bed beside Isak, and her hand sought his for comfort in anticipation of the winter's terror, not so many months away. So often in the cold and loneliness of the winter she reached out in her sleep for him, to find only the deep unfriendly dark and the agony of a fitful dream. On those nights she would wrap herself in a woolen shawl and steal to the children's beds; she would listen to their quiet breathing; she would touch them in an effort to bring warmth to her heart by the feel of those who were of the flesh and blood of him who might at this moment be a frozen corpse in the angry sea. And now so soon it would be Leonhard too.

The days wore on, and all the energies of the Island were spent in methodical preparation for the winter fishing. The summer season for herring was over. The bursting seines, filling hundreds of barrels, had been hauled in and the nets hung up in the lofts to dry and to be repaired with shuttle and twine. Now the preparation for the cod fishing was in full swing. Small steamers and sailboats were packed to full capacity and set sail for Finmarken, where their loads of herring were to be sold for bait.

Other vessels employed men, women, and children to help gill the herring. The gills were cut, pulled, or bitten off; then the fish were salted into barrels, loaded into the hulls, and shipped to Trondhjem and Bergen, from there

to be marketed all over the world. This year the school of fish had struck close by and the Island basked in great prosperity. The activity was like that along the water fronts of the big seaports. From morning until night, and through the night until dawn again, came the incessant noise of the steam winches, the rattle of anchor chains, the whining of the block and tackle, and the hammering as the cooper closed the barrels.

Times were not always so prosperous. For several years in succession the fishing had been poor, and it was lucky that Isak had a frugal and thrifty wife. Each year the men had started off full of new hope, and each year the wives and children had faced starvation when the boats had sailed despondently back into the little harbor. It was bad enough to have to face the terrible storms and the winter's privations if a man could come back with his pockets full of money. But it was heartbreaking to live through them for nothing. These were not pleasant home-comings, for there would be no credit with the merchants. Often their very homes were auctioned away to cover at least a part of their debts.

The men were at a loss to account for this dearth of cod-fish year after year. It seemed that it must be the wholesale killing of the whales by those who controlled the great whaling industry. The Islanders knew from hundreds of years' experience that the whales drove the smelt and herring up to the coast and that then the cod followed in their wake and so came within reach of the fishermen. Thus they reasoned that if the whales were decimated the smelt and herring would not come up the coast and the cod

would stay away in the depths far off out in the Arctic Ocean.

Convinced that their theory came close to the truth, they made pathetic appeals to the government urging it to restrict the killing of the whales. But it was of no avail; the industry was strong at Christiania, the capital. In years past whales were a common sight among the fishing fleet, but since the steamers had been equipped with the new harpoon gun they were seen only now and then. The men of Skjervoy turned to their big man, Isak, for his help and advice. They suggested a closed period of thirty years for whales. Isak joined with them in their protest, but still the powers in the government turned a deaf ear to their request.

After months of privation, the fishermen along the whole coast formed a plan of action. They banded together and sent representatives to all the fishing grounds where there were whaling stations and refineries. One day at an appointed hour an army of fishermen marched up to the stations, drove out the crews and officers, and hoisted their chains and cables to the smokestacks. Slings were attached to the chains and with hundreds of men on the lines the smokestacks were pulled down, destroying everything as they fell. Sledges and chisels were used to break the machinery to bits. Houses were razed to the ground and the entire station leveled.

Thousands of the fishermen were implicated. Now it was the turn of the whaling companies to flounder for help, and immediately a warship was dispatched to quell the rioting. But it was too late—the work was done.

Feeble attempts at arrests were made, but it was impossible to punish the entire fishing population. The people had fought with their backs to the wall, and at last the victory was theirs.

Isak, as the foremost citizen of the Island, was requested to write a final statement condemning the whaling. It was read in the Storting, or Senate, and soon afterward a law was passed protecting the whales for thirty years. Thus the industry was transferred to Spitzbergen, to Alaska, and even to as far away as the South Seas. But it was of little concern to the people of Skjervoy where the whalers went so long as they could look forward to fine fishing in the North.

When the day for the boats to set sail arrived the excitement had increased a hundredfold. If only it should be as they had prophesied! If the fishing were good there would be letters coming from the North with ten- and twenty-krone notes fluttering from the envelopes; there would be new dresses, plenty of food, new fishing gear, and renewed credit at the merchants.

The women, wrapped in their bright woolen shawls, gathered on the beach, holding the lanterns for their husbands. There were no tears, though some tried to prolong the farewells and clung to their men as if they were seeing them for the last time. Isak stood apart for a moment with his arms around Ane, whispering words of comfort and good cheer—for in April Ane would have another child, and he knew that when he went Ane's heart went with him.

Now the Leviathan stood ready and the men were eager



to set sail. It was still dark, and save for the bobbing rays from the lanterns the morning was black and awesome. The beach rang with good-byes. Isak was the last man to step into the little rowboat. For another year the terrible agony of parting was over.

Hand in hand, Leonhard and his mother walked slowly back to the house, where they took up their lookout at the north window and watched the red light on Isak's boat become a tiny dot and then disappear into the darkness.

In the days that followed Ane had little time for dreaming and in spite of the feeling of emptiness occasioned by Isak's absence the time passed rapidly. But there was ever present the fear for Isak's safety to make life less joyous, and Ane felt that when the little red light on the Leviathan had disappeared her whole soul had died, not to be revived until the white sails appeared again in the spring and the anguish of the winter was over. She thanked God that she still had Leonhard.

With January came the winter storms, frequent and terrible. One evening Ane sat at her weaving, glancing up occasionally to take account of the stormy elements. It was time to think of getting supper. The cows must be watered, and she must have peat if the fire was to last through the night. It was harder these days to bring the water, and she waited for Leonhard to come. He had been off on his skis with Margit and the children from the village. Now the rage of the blizzard was sweeping the Island, and he was late.

Ane heard the stamping of boots outside and the children's good-byes. A blanket of snow blustered over the

threshold, and it required all the strength Leonhard could muster to close the door against the storm.

"It's a bad night, Mother," he said, as he shook his frozen mittens and began unwrapping the woolen scarf from around his neck.

"Yes," she answered; "and a worse one on sea than on land. But you must go for the peat, Leonhard. We have not enough to last the night."

Leonhard drew on the stiff mittens.

"Shall I bring the water for Lisa too?"

Ane wished she might say no, but without raising her head from her work she acquiesced, saying that he was now almost a man and the dairymaid was but a mere woman after all.

Leonhard took the bucket from its place and went down the stairs into the darkness of the cellar below. Ane heard the door bang as he trudged off to the cow barn with his burden, and her heart was glad that this child of hers was strong and well. He was her comfort, and already she had learned to lean on him.

Leonhard set his bucket down beside Lisa, and she too felt gratitude for his help. It had been a hard day.

"Leonhard, some fine day you will make Margit a good little husband. You can do a man's work now."

Leonhard blushed, the warm blood rushing to his frosty cheeks. He thought the maid very pretty and he liked fetching water for her. His young heart was warmed by her praise, and he wished he were older so that some day he could marry her. Margit suddenly seemed very young and foolish.

“Ho, ho! Margit — she is too little for me. I shall want a fine strong girl like you.” But even as he said it he wished he had not, for he somehow felt that he had done Margit a wrong.

“Well, I must go for the peat now. It is getting late, and the storm is growing worse.”

He left the maid to her thoughts and turned again into the stinging blizzard. He fastened on his skis and trudged along, dragging behind him the big hand sled. Though it was a long way, he loved to battle against the storm. It was easy with the empty sled, but when at last he turned toward home again the heavy sack of turf was as much as he could manage. He was glad to see the yellow windows gleaming through the snow, and at last to close the door behind him in the coziness of the warm room.

The table was already laid with the steaming mush swimming in butter and syrup, and the mugs of milk stood waiting. The younger children scrambled to their places. Leonhard sat in his father's place opposite Ane. The mother looked around the table — at Sigurd, who was eight, at Harolda, who was five, and at Astrid, the two-year-old, who was beating her spoon on the table. There were already many spoon marks on its rough surface, and soon there would be another child to make more dents and scratches. Ane loved them all, but Leonhard most, who had come to her and Isak in the springtime of their love.

Ane could not eat. Her thoughts were too much in the North, and she scarcely touched the food before her. For it would be a trying night on land too, and she must force

herself to think of their own safety. To-night the children must be put to bed fully dressed in their winter clothing, while Ane and the servants sat by fearfully watching the storm.

Late that night Ane stole to Leonhard's bed. He was sleeping quietly after his efforts of the day. She hated to wake him, but he must help Lisa shovel a path to the barn. If the men had been there they would have put heavy ropes and chains on the roofs to keep them from being blown away. But in their absence the family were safer in the barn, which was in a little hollow above the house and protected from the wind.

When Leonhard emerged Lisa was already busy with her shovel, tunneling her way to the barn. This time there was no conversation between them: they could not even shout above the storm. It was a hard job and they needed all their strength for the task. When at length it was finished Leonhard made fast a stout piece of rope from the house to the barn so that they should not lose their way, and he helped bring the children one by one into the little safe shelter. Then he returned for the quilts and sheepskin robes. These he put into the hay, making deep warm nestlike beds, and all but Ane sank forgetfully into them. She lay awake for hours staring into the darkness, praying for Isak in Finmarken. At length she too dozed off, and all was quiet in the barn save for the occasional clanking of chains on the cows as they moved in their stalls and the howling of the gale outside.

Ane awoke, dreading the realization of a new day and fearful lest the storm should not have blown itself away.



The children still slept and the storm was over. The howling of the wind was now only a low moan purring gently through the cracks. All night she had held the baby Astrid close within her arm, and now as she stirred the child moved and Ane looked down on the blue eyes blinking up at the great rafters above. One by one she woke the sleeping children, and they stretched and yawned in their soft nests.

"Come, come! It is late, and we are slow and lazy." She wrapped the little Astrid in a shawl, and, herding them all before her like a mother hen with her brood, marshaled the little caravan back through the passage. At the end they paused while Leonhard shoveled away the snow which barricaded the door. The tasks of the day once more went on. The water was drawn, the breakfast was eaten, and the whole routine of the winter morning was the same as though there had never been that ghostly night of terror. Leonhard went out into the calm of the universe after the storm. His hands felt so bulky in the heavy mittens that he could hardly hold the handle of the birch broom with which he was to clean the icicles from the windows and sweep away the snow from the threshold of the door. But his heart was light in the peace of the morning. The billows still foamed in the fjord as sullen reminders of the night passed. But Leonhard went about his work whistling. It was easier to chop the kindling on a day like this; it was good to be alive.

He grew warmer as he chopped the light wood, and he stopped for a moment to loosen the scarf about his neck. As he did so he saw Margit coming around the corner of

the house on her skis. He called out to her as she came skimming along over the light snow.

"Ho, Margit! Watch out for the woodpile there."

"I see it, silly. I've brought a letter from the post."

She extended it in her red-mittened hand. Leonhard reached eagerly, and then, lest Margit should think him youthful in his ardor, he slipped the envelope into his pocket with the air of its having no importance. Lisa might be looking at them from some out-of-the-way place, and he wished to assume an air of indifference. Also he wished Margit to believe that the kiss he had imprinted on her cheek but yesterday meant nothing, for he was a man now. Was he not doing a man's work?

"You'd better take that letter to your mother. It's for her, and it's from Finmarken."

Leonhard looked at her, and again drew forth the letter.

"In that case, I will," he said, and went into the house, slamming the heavy door behind him.

His mother was busy in the kitchen. "What have you there, Leonhard — a letter for me?"

"Yes; and it's from Finmarken."

Ane's heart gave a leap in her breast, and she wiped her hands on her apron, that she might not soil the precious envelope with the juice from the potatoes she was peeling.

Leonhard too was eager to hear the news, but he sensed the privacy of what the envelope contained, and he returned to his wood and axe. But Margit was gone. He felt a little pang at this. He had rather enjoyed the thought that Margit would be there while he worked. It would

make the time pass more quickly, and the work much pleasanter; then, too, she would see how strong he was.

Ane carried her letter into her bedroom and closed the door. There was nothing to hide, but the sacredness of Isak's letter should be hers alone, and she wanted to be by herself. Eagerly she slipped her finger under the flap and drew out the letter. As she did so a twenty-kroner note fluttered to the floor. It was an omen that the letter would contain good news.

She read each word telling of the good fishing and of Isak's concern for her welfare. As she read on she could scarcely believe what she saw. There must be some mistake. "I believe you should send Leonhard North on the first steamer. The fishing is excellent, and he could make a few kroner. We can use him to do odd jobs on shore, and it will be good training for him."

The rest was just a blur of words to Ane. The thing she feared had come so soon, and she had learned to count so much on this boy of eleven. For the first time in her life Ane felt resentment against Isak and had the feeling that he was doing her an injustice. But Leonhard was also his, and she would not hold him back.

She tucked the letter away in the envelope and the twenty-kroner note as well. This would no doubt help offset the expense of boat fare and the purchase of the hip boots, yellow oilskins, and southwester. Only yesterday she had been to the merchant's and had seen the notice concerning the departure of the next boat, and only this morning in her prayers she had thanked God that those at home were safe and that Leonhard was hers until the



THE FISHING VILLAGE OF SKJERVOY



THE HARBOR OF HONNINGSVOG



fishing grounds could claim him. She could not have dreamt it would be so soon.

"The next boat," Isak had said, and that was two days off. So little time to make preparation. It was a lucky thing that there were extra pairs of socks and mittens from her needles laid away for an emergency; for here was an emergency indeed. Would the boy want to go? Often she had heard him say, "When I am a head man, I shall do this and that at the fishing grounds." In spite of her efforts to attract him to a life on land, she knew that he inherited his father's love of the sea.

She could hear the sharp strokes of the axe splitting the kindling, and Leonhard whistling at his work. She pulled herself together and began to think more calmly, making mental notes of what would be needed. First there was the matter of boots. The shoemaker would have to do her a great favor if the boots were to be ready in time.

It was seldom that Ane went off on skis, for when she made her pilgrimages to the village it was usually after her morning's work was done, and by that time a path had been beaten down between the drifts. Leonhard was surprised to see his mother leaning over her skis. He dropped his axe on the pile of wood and went to help her with the fastenings.

"What's up, Mother? Where are you going on skis at this time of the day?"

"I'm going to the shoemaker's, and you are going with me."

Leonhard looked up in astonishment.

"But I don't need shoes. I still have my new pair which I have hardly worn."

"I know — but I have a surprise for you. Your father has written that you are to come to Finmarken on the next boat."

How Ane had dreaded the look of joy that passed over Leonhard's face. She had somehow hoped a miracle would happen and that he would not want to go; then she could write Isak and perhaps persuade him to let her keep the boy for another year. But now his hands trembled with excitement, making him clumsy as he tried to fasten the straps and buckles. When the business of getting Ane's feet securely fastened in the harness was done Leonhard flew to get his own skis, which he had left standing up against the house, and started after his mother. The heavy trudging motion of the one and the light gliding of the other bespoke their different emotions as clearly as any words.

When she saw him arrayed in his new outfit, his shining hip boots (for the shoemaker had done his utmost) and his crisp yellow oilskins, her heart felt no lighter. She read the pride and pleasure in his eyes as he showed the other village boys his fisherman's regalia. Now he was in a class by himself, for soon he would be in Hammerfest, where rumor said that one fought for supremacy among the town bullies and a boy had to make his way with his fists. To-morrow he would leave, and he wanted to be sure Margit would see him dressed for his new life as a fisherman. So he paced several times past her cottage, until at last she came out to admire the little Viking.

If he enjoyed the admiration of his comrades, he was delighted with the flattering exclamations of Margit. Margit might not be as big as Lisa, but she was prettier, and some day she would be big. He would surely bring her a bag of candy and a red ribbon for her shiny yellow curls when he returned from the fishing grounds.

While he was taking his leave Ane was busy. She was packing his homemade trunk with warm clothing and the usual stock of provisions — dark bread made crispy and thin, and a dried leg of mutton. Tucked away into a corner of the trunk was the one great delicacy of the fisherman — *lefse*. It had taken nearly all day to complete the *lefse*, as it had to go through so many stages of preparation. It was made of unraised dough, rolled as thin as paper into a large round slice two feet in diameter. It was cooked to a crisp on a big griddle over the open fire, and afterward given a thin coating of paste made of wheat flour which turned it white on the outside. It was then put back over the fire for an instant, next buttered on one side, then given a last coating of powdered goat's cheese, after which the whole was sprinkled over with sugar. By this time it had become soft enough to be folded like a newspaper, rolled up, and packed away.

The next day, as Ane and Leonhard carried the little old trunk to the boat, her loyalty to Isak vanished for an instant and all her pent-up bitterness burst forth. The child's eyes were wide with astonishment at his mother's words, for he had never before heard her give such vent to her feelings, nor had he ever seen her cry.

"But, Mother, are n't you glad Father thinks me big and

strong enough to go? I am the oldest — surely it is right for me to be with my father.”

“Glad? To send you off into the maelstrom? Is it not enough that he must go, without another to worry about? He will take you all away from me, one by one. Has that terrible ocean no pity?”

They stood now close by the little boat waiting to take its passenger to the steamer riding at anchor far out in the fjord. How much longer Ane might have gone on Leonhard never knew, for the gruff voices of the sailors cut short the cry of heartache. They were old salts of the sea, and had long since ceased to take much account of tearful partings. Leonhard wished he could think of something to say, but no words would come. With a few hurried bits of advice Ane kissed her son and he stepped into the little boat, his heart torn. He wished she had not cried out against his journey, because it was not a pleasant picture to take with him — the picture of her grief.

His own importance seemed suddenly very small and the need of his mother very great. He almost wished he had refused to go, but it was too late now; and would they not all be as safe on the Leviathan as in their own beds in Skjervoy? Had not his grandfather said so? His mother was still waving as long as he could see her at all. He was glad that he could no longer see her tears.

The boat steamed out of the harbor and, pointing her nose towards the gap between the two islands, made for the open sea. The boy thrilled to the biting of the sharp north wind and the prospect of the voyage before him. As they skirted the last island the line of beach became a



blurred streak on the horizon and he could no longer distinguish his home. It was indeed a great venture, but he had a sense of remorse as he thought of his mother, and wondered whether after all he had done a wise thing. The aftermath of the storm grew more apparent as the boat ploughed on, and it pitched deep down into the heavy swells, then rose to the top like a great cork, shuddered and seemed to stand still on the crest of a wave, then drove downward again into the trough of the sea. Leonhard felt sick. For the moment his enthusiasm vanished and he felt very small and miserable.

Late that night they reached Hammerfest, and instead of the thrill he had expected to feel at being in this harbor of the fishing grounds he was glad to curl up in his sheepskin robe on the deck and cry himself to sleep. Nothing in his old trunk tempted him; instead, pictures of his mother cooking the delicacies rose in his mind, and he wished he had listened to her before it was too late. That night and the next day he stayed wrapped up in his robe, trying to forget his loneliness. Toward evening he crept out, because they would soon be in Honningsvåg and his father would surely come out in his skiff to meet him and bring him ashore. It was rough and stormy and he still felt sick, but his father had considered him a man and it would never do to show how little like a man he felt. In his childish way he reasoned with himself and tried to pull himself together.

Leonhard now could see mountains rising up out of the sea like great black sentinels of the harbor; the lights of the houses on land and on the wharves shone from behind

the frosty windows like yellow stars dim in a cloudy sky. There was only a slight motion now as they entered the harbor. Other lights shone from the cabins of the boats, and he heard the voices of the men within as they called from one to another over the water.

This was Honningsvåg. Those on the steamer were anxious to get off, for the news of the run of cod had been posted in the towns along the coast and they were eager to be after their share.

Leonhard was so jostled that he decided to stand back until they had all pushed by and he could get his bearings. He drew back to his place by the rail and waited. When the excitement had quieted down and the voices had drifted off into the night, mingling with the splashing of the oars, he heard a familiar shout just below. His father had rowed out as Leonhard had expected. Now he was talking to the captain, who was at the head of the gangway.

"Is the boy on board, Erling?"

At the sound of those words Leonhard's misgivings vanished. He waited no longer, but rushed down to the gangway, sickness and loneliness forgotten.

"Here I am, Father!"

Then, not wishing to appear ungrateful, he turned to the captain and extended a small mittened hand to him. The captain smiled to himself and secretly admired the spirit of the young blacksmith — Isak had a boy of whom a man could be proud.

"They tell me the fishing is excellent this season," he was saying to Isak.

Isak replied that it was the prohibition of the whaling that had done it. "We can't complain," he said.

Erling helped Leonhard into the little rowboat. "It has been a bad trip, Isak, but the lad seems to have weathered it. Good luck to you both."

Leonhard had forgotten his trunk in his eagerness, and so he held the skiff to the gangway while Isak disappeared on board to fetch it. The thrill was upon him once more: at last his anticipation had become a reality.

In the little skiff, shivering from cold and excitement, he felt important as he answered his father's questions about those at home and especially about his mother. They had been getting along nicely, he said, but he doubted Sigurd's ability to take his place, for he was pretty young. He took care to make no reference to his mother's outburst at his departure.

The little cabin on shore that was to be his home while they were at the station was a cozy-looking place. It was small, and its one room held three boat crews. The warmth within made their bodies tingle and smart after the cold outside, but it was pleasant, and the smell of the supper cooking on the stove made Leonhard realize how hungry he was. Some of the men were pulling off their frozen boots to thaw them out by the fire; others rose from the tiers of bunks and the fishline tubs where they had been sitting, to drink a dram of welcome to the young newcomer.

The men questioned Leonhard about their families, eager for every scrap of news. Then came the supper of boiled cod liver and potatoes. Satisfied hunger and the

friendly warmth of the cabin made him drowsy and he was glad to crawl into his sheepskin robe in the bunk he was to share with his father. The air of the cabin was thick and suffocating, but by morning, with the fire out, it would be icy cold, and the swirling snow would have drifted through the cracks and covered the floor.

Next day the men were up early. Leonhard awoke to feel his arms and legs stiff with cold, but with the tempting smell of coffee filling his nostrils. The men had pulled on their frozen boots, and already the floor was littered with fishhooks and slippery with the herring cut for bait. Starfish and sunfish were rolled out of the tubs in which the lines and hooks were coiled, while the men tramped in and out through the mess, snatching a cup of coffee and a piece of dry bread as they stumbled by each other in the confusion. As long as the fishing stayed at its peak breakfast was a minor consideration. The baiting of the hooks was to be Leonhard's job, as well as helping with the cooking and the laundry. By the time the men left, the air of the cabin was so thick with the smoke from their strong pipes and so pervaded by the stench of fish that Leonhard again felt a little sick. He opened the door to clear the atmosphere. The wind blew in like a frigid breath from the graves of the dead, and with it a flurry of snow that added to the slime and litter on the floor.

He busied himself washing the woolen things in the snow and spreading them out to dry. They were full of lice. But the creatures froze in the intense cold, so that when he went back in the late afternoon he had only to shake the garments and the unwelcome invaders fell out in

hundreds. The sheepskin robes had become so infested that it was impossible to make any impression upon them, the vermin remaining deeply embedded in the long fur. Toward evening, when the men came in from their labors numb with cold, Leonhard had the supper cooking, and every bone in his small body ached from the hard work of the day.

After supper, as if the sixteen men were not enough in the little room, two men from neighboring cabins dropped in for a dram, one of them bursting with importance and eager to tell of a strange encounter of the day. It was a common thing for the fishermen to visit around after supper, matching their experiences, and possibly tucking away the remains of a supper better than their own.

Aslak sat down on an overturned keg where the men made room for him, and began his story.

"There were three of us in the boat, and as we headed up into the wind I happened to look to the side and I saw queer bubbles coming up to the surface. I paid no attention to them at first. We had our deep hand lines out for cod, when all of a sudden up over the rail there came two great arms, one each side of the boat, and soon other small arms appeared. Two of the boys had bait so heavy they could hardly budge their lines. They pulled them in slowly, thinking they had a monster halibut.

"Imagine our terror when we realized that here was a giant devilfish! The small suckers were spreading all over the boat, and Lars was caught in two of them. We had no axe, so we went after it with the only knife we had aboard. We finally succeeded in getting the arms cut



away, but we could feel the boat cracking under the downward pressure. The water all around was colored blue from the blood, but the thing was still clinging with its suckers to the outside of the boat. We tried to row, but could get nowhere. Then we used the knife more furiously than ever, for the boat by this time was deep in the water. We took our oars and hacked away at the tentacles.

"Finally the beast's hold slackened and we pulled loose, rowing as I have never rowed before. We brought many of the arms with us: some of the big ones were four inches through."

The listeners sat quiet and wide-eyed. At the conclusion of the story they stirred and looked at each other. Isak was smiling, for Aslak was known for his exaggeration. They accepted his words as doubtful and were somewhat incredulous, but enjoyed the horror of his stories. Isak was the first to speak.

"Come, Aslak, was it really as bad as that? Now if it had been Draugen, there would have been something to think about." Draugen was the supernatural man who the fishermen believed lived in the sea and who was often seen prowling around the boats and on the beach in the moonlight. Hardy as they were, these Norsemen were children at heart and had their superstitions, the greatest of which concerned Draugen. Aslak often claimed to have met him face to face early in the dark winter mornings. This Isak gravely doubted, but he had listened to Aslak's account of his last meeting with considerable interest in spite of himself.

Aslak told them that on this particular morning he had risen earlier than usual to shovel the snow out of the boats. It was four o'clock, and he was about to begin his work when he was halted by the sound of a faint song from the sea, coming nearer as he listened. According to his story, he decided to get on with his shoveling, but when he reached the boat all the oars and equipment had been removed and the boat was tied fore and aft with such knots as he had never before seen, and which he was not able to untie. He looked everywhere for traces of the guilty one, but there were no tracks to be seen in the fresh snow. Just as he was wondering what he should do, he looked out beyond the boat, and there stood a man in oilskins. He was in water up to his knees and carried a large bunch of seaweed in his left hand, and he glowed with the phosphorous that was burning all over him. He waved his right hand towards the shore as if warning Aslak not to put out to sea. He then emitted an unearthly sound, splashed once or twice in the water, and, floundering like a duck trying to take to wing, disappeared into the darkness.

Aslak reported that he then went over and told the men in the next cabin about it and the word passed from one to another. Before daylight the worst blizzard of the winter had blown up, and those who heeded the warning and believed the story stayed ashore. Those who scoffed at Aslak's yarn and put forth regardless were lost. That day there was heavy damage to the fishing fleet.

Even Isak would heed Draugen's warning, but Aslak's story of the devilfish was received with an incredulous

smile. Soon the smile became contagious and remarks were passed on Aslak's astounding imagination. Aslak spat out his quid in disgust and with his companion strode off into the night.

Leonhard's dreams were of devilfish and his mother and Margit, together with his trying to bait thousands of hooks with herring and never being able to get them done no matter how fast he worked. He was glad when it was time to get up. That day he spent in bundling and hanging up codfish heads to dry, getting hundreds of them ready to ship to Bergen, where they would be ground up for fertilizer. His day's work brought him in one and a half kroner. The next day, baiting six hundred hooks, he increased his pay another krone. Leonhard was almost glad that he was not old enough to go deep-sea fishing. He was making money enough to satisfy his needs, and each night as he put his earnings safely away in an old tobacco can he felt that he was getting wealthy and would be able to buy his presents for Margit.

Sometimes in the evening he would make friends with boys older than himself from Hammerfest. Small as he was, he was able to hold his own in their friendly fights and brawls, so that he was soon recognized on his own merits as well as by being known as Isak's son.

Towards spring the fishing fell off. The men grew restless as they thought of home, and as soon as one captain had voiced his intentions of sailing south the fever spread like an epidemic. When, far out at sea, there appeared the white sails of those returning from further north, the restlessness became chronic, and soon the whole fishing

fleet was making preparations for departure. Isak too was eager to be off. A telegram had come announcing the safe arrival of Ane's fifth child, and though he believed all was well with her he wished for no delay.

It was the first of June, and night and day they sailed with a light northeasterly breeze, and twenty-four hours of sunshine. They stopped for a day in Hammerfest, and Leonhard was glad he had not seen it on his way to the fishing grounds, for now it was far more exciting. The day was spent in shopping; new suits, hats, shoes, and Sunday finery were bought, along with presents for the loved ones at home. The whiskey store got its share of trade, and was the scene of wild hilarity and celebrating.

By ten o'clock the Leviathan was again under sail, though most of its crew were not very sober and had to be put to bed in the little cabin one by one. Only Leonhard and his father were on deck, and Leonhard felt the pride of being a true sailor as he scurried from bow to stern in answer to his father's orders. It was a fine night, and the boats sailed companionably side by side in the glow of the midnight sun. Across the water there came the strains of music, a violin or a mouth organ, and laughter and singing drifted through the still night air. It was spring, and they were going home.

Isak had replaced the cash in Leonhard's tobacco box with forty brand-new krone bills, and each night the lad fingered them over carefully to be sure they were all there. No king in his fine palace felt richer than the young blacksmith. On the fourth morning, one after another the boats came into the harbor, and the beach was alive with

loved ones hardly able to wait until the little skiffs should span the distance between boats and shore.

There were some who did not come to the water's edge, but hid their grief behind their doors, for their men would never come back. It distressed Leonhard that Lars and young Torstein were not there. Their fathers had been lost the day that Draugen gave his eerie warning. He wondered if no others felt the cloud that darkened his perfect day. But his sun shone again, and as soon as he could distinguish familiar faces his heart gave a bound to see Margit there with his brother and sisters.

He wanted to greet her, yet he drew back as the reality came closer. He might have known she would be there, yet he had thought about this moment and wondered — girls were such queer things. He clutched his small package tighter, and felt the hard candy grow sticky in his warm palm. Ane had the little Astrid by the hand and the new baby wrapped in a shawl in her arms. Isak kissed them all in turn, lifting each up high in the air as he did so. He took the bundle from Ane and turned back a corner of the shawl. What a fine boy!

Margit stood a little to one side, and a wave of shyness came over Leonhard as he went towards her. For no reason that he could explain, he thrust the package into his pocket and his hands felt very big and awkward. Ane feasted her eyes on husband and son, until suddenly she remembered the little girl who stood apart by herself.

"Are n't you going to greet Margit, Leonhard? She has asked for you often." Red in the face, Leonhard went to Margit and gave her a rather limp handshake in greet-



ing. The procession began moving towards the house, but, as Margit still hung back, Ane again noticed the child's reticence.

"You must come with us, Margit," she said; and Margit came, walking beside Leonhard, though nothing passed between them but an occasional shy smile.

The table was set with buns and chocolate, for this was a holiday feast; it was only on great occasions that such delicacies graced the homely board. Before they sat down Leonhard ran to his room to make sure that all his precious treasures were as he had left them. He went from one to the other of the familiar objects. Everything was the same, and his soul was singing out, "How good it is to be home again!"

For a moment Margit and Leonhard were alone. In the familiar surroundings Leonhard's shyness left him and he felt more like a conquering hero under Margit's scrutiny and silent admiration. He drew forth his package from the pocket of his coat and thrust it toward her.

"Here is a present for you, Margit. It is some candy, and a red ribbon for your hair."

Margit blushed and thanked him, and as she undid the wrappings Leonhard leaned over and kissed the back of her neck where the curls divided.

"I like you, Margit," he said; and he would have said more, but the children clamored into the room, followed by Isak and Ane. Leonhard and Margit moved sheepishly apart, and Margit tucked her presents quickly under her jacket that lay on the chair. The older children followed Isak close at his heels, and the younger ones

clutched at his trouser legs like clumsy puppies. He picked Astrid up and set her in her high chair, chucking her affectionately under her dimpled chin, before walking to his place opposite Ane. Leonhard sat across from Margit, and the sun pouring in through the window danced on her hair and turned it to coppery gold. Some day, Leonhard thought, he would play with it in the sunlight. He thought he would like to touch it and see if it felt as soft as it looked. Isak smiled around the table, and his eyes finally rested on Ane. He raised his glass, and Ane in turn raised hers. "Skaal," he said as he tossed off his dram, and Ane's eyes smiled back over the brim of her glass.

Yes, Leonhard decided, it was good to be home.

During the summer Leonhard found that he would soon be rated as a half-share man, to judge from the long hours he spent in the blacksmith shop. At first he worked at the bellows until he felt as if his arms and shoulders no longer belonged to his body. But it was not until the next summer that he began his blacksmithing for the boats. He learned to turn out boat irons of all sorts, and he prepared the crude part of cook pots and tinware in general.

The next two winters he did not go to the fishing grounds, but spent his time in school or tramping off over the countryside on skis with the other children. When the summer days came around the youth of the village went to work at their tasks. Leonhard put in long hours at the shop, now turning out copper kettles, cowbells and dinner bells, and hundreds of boat irons.

In the evening groups of young people journeyed up the mountain to spend the hours under the midnight sun. Sometimes on Saturdays they stayed all night, searching for sea gulls' eggs, or playing games and then sitting down to rest until the early morning, when they all came trooping back to the village. Sundays they had their baseball games. Again the government supplied them with rifles and ammunition, encouraging every boy to become a crack marksman. But the greatest sport of the Island was wrestling, and at this Leonhard excelled. His long hours swinging the sledge had developed his muscles, and though he was still small he was quick and strong. When they had their tests of strength, lifting heavy anchors or giant pieces of iron, his power of arm and back was the equal of any.

Sometimes Leonhard went with the men from the shop to cut turf. They went far off to the bogs, where they cut the peat into thousands of square bricks, spreading them on the surrounding cliffs. After they were dried they were piled into stacks like beehives and sent down on a trolley wire to the beach, and from there were put into a boat and carried off to be used for fuel during the winter.

After his school work was done Leonhard used to sit in the evenings with his friend Linken. In the years following the wreck of the box steamship Linken read all the books he could find, for it was his aspiration to become the captain of a real boat in a real fishing fleet. He read stories of Alaska, that country thousands of miles away, and in tales glowing with his imagination he gave Leonhard accounts of the fishing there. The two young heads spent

many hours bent over columns of figures beneath the light of a dim oil lamp.

"Some day," Leonhard said, "we will work our way over on a coaling boat, and we will come back rich."

Margit had grown more beautiful, but Lisa, the maid, was the same — large and buxom, with ruddy cheeks, big red hands, and plump figure, she was suggestive of the cow barn. Leonhard still thought her very pretty, though Lisa knew it was Margit who was most in his thoughts. She began to dislike Margit's lithe figure, her lovely face with its delicate features, and the shy, reserved manner which distinguished Margit, the lady, from Lisa, the dairy-maid. Lisa was bitter, for she fancied Leonhard more than she would have cared to admit. At night when he brought the buckets of water and their hands met as he set down the pail a little thrill flashed through her.

When, after the day's labor was done, Lisa saw Margit and Leonhard start off for the mountains she wished she might change places with the slender golden-haired girl.

When the sun, setting lower and lower over the mountain peaks, proclaimed the approach of winter, it was arranged that Leonhard should go to Finmarken again. One particularly cold fall evening Leonhard and Margit were resting on the peak of Kaagen Mountain in a little crevasse away from the others. The moon was full in the heavens, and it shone down on the glacier which lay like a dark Russian sapphire set in the side of the cliffs. The water out in the fjord was calm and peaceful, and the little waves lapped the sides of the mountain below, gurgling pleasantly in and out of the deep ravines, swishing and

swashing back and forth. The lights in the village went out one by one, and still Margit and Leonhard sat close together, murmuring the sweet things that only the love of seventeen can find to say.

The laughter of the others grew fainter and fainter as the couples wended their way back down the mountain. Often Leonhard had fulfilled his urgent wish to touch Margit's hair. This night the moonlight had turned it to silver. His own head was in Margit's lap now, and Leonhard loved to feel her hands straying over his forehead. He lay there looking up into the eyes he knew and loved so well. Life was opening its door to these children and they were passing over its threshold. Earlier in the evening Leonhard had told Margit that he was to go to the fishing grounds. She had grasped his strong hand in both of hers, and that little pressure had betrayed her reaction to his calm announcement. Several times Leonhard had thought that she too was on the verge of telling him something, but she said nothing, and their talk drifted to love and the present, letting the future take care of itself.

Leonhard laid her hand against his cheek.

"Margit," he said, "do you love me?"

"You know I do. Loving you is what will make it harder to leave Skjervoy."

Leonhard dropped her hand and sat up suddenly. "Leave Skjervoy?" His blue eyes met hers in the moonlight. Somehow he and Margit had always seemed to belong to each other, and he had taken her for granted. He knew that, whatever happened, she was his, and in her gentle, quiet way she was always there waiting for him.



It was Margit whose open admiration had buoyed him up when he went to Finmarken; it was Margit he wanted most to see on his return. No matter how badly things went, it was always Margit, Margit.

For a moment, while these thoughts rushed in a torrent through Leonhard's brain, she did not speak. At last she answered him.

"I am going to Christiania."

"Christiania?" Leonhard's voice was still asking the question. He could not seem to comprehend what she was saying.

"Yes. I shan't mind it so much if you are going to be in Finmarken. I should have been miserable here without you, and the winter would seem so long. Then, too, I must get a position. There is no chance here, and my uncle thinks I should be helping out a little."

"But you are not used to work, and your uncle could take care of you here."

Then a new thought struck him. He looked down at the hand he clutched convulsively, and continued slowly:—

"There will be plenty of city boys running after you there. Will you then be still thinking of me in Finmarken?"

Margit's voice was very low. "I shall always be thinking of you, Leonhard—you know that. Perhaps some fine day you will be coming to Christiania. You are doing well in the shop,—everyone says so,—and you will surely be coming there to make your masterpiece."

Leonhard felt the forced enthusiasm of her words, and

they were of little comfort. He could not think of Skjervoy without Margit. He drew very close to her, brushing his warm young lips against her cheek. He wanted to hold her close — to feel her warm body against him, and sweep away the loneliness with which her news had enveloped him. His arms were cruel in their strength.

“Margit, Margit, don’t leave me.” Often Leonhard had kissed her, but it had been the light-hearted caress of boyhood adoration. Now it was the kiss of a man whose dormant emotions had been brought to life. Many were the lads who would have liked to take Leonhard’s place with Margit, but always she had held them off, for she wanted to save all she might have given them for Leonhard. Always in the back of her mind there were the reiterating words, “Some day, some day.”

And so little Margit, the frail, delicate flower, was transplanted to another garden, while Leonhard became a half-share man on the Leviathan and sailed off to Finmarken.

This time he did not walk proudly up the street to show his new oilskin outfit to the boys of the village. He went a roundabout way home from the merchant’s so that he should not have to pass Margit’s house. Margit was gone and there was no reason for his passing. It just made the pain a little worse.

Only Lisa was left to console him, and nowadays when he brought in the water he would sit down on the little wooden stool and help with the cows. He was conscious of Lisa only as a healthy rustic wench. She would often find him sitting there whittling a piece of wood, with a

scowl on his face, and twisting his mouth as if the whittling might be working off the pent-up something that goaded him day by day. But to Lisa these evenings in the cow barn were glorious, and now with Margit safe in Christiania — well, who knew — Christiania was a long way off. But Lisa waited in vain for any signs that her feelings were shared by the young blacksmith. The pang of the first parting was over and time was softening the loneliness, but still the letters went to Christiania and still Leonhard was quiet and moody. There was no spark kindled for Lisa.

Toward the end of February preparations were again in progress for the departure of the fishermen. The village stirred from under its blanket of snow and every man became intent upon getting his equipment in order and procuring new gear and supplies, while the women made ready the woolen clothing and tenderly packed the little treasure trunks for their men.

If Isak had any superstition in life other than his rather vague belief in the existence of Draugen, it was the importance he attached to the dreams he had on the night before he embarked for the fishing grounds. This year he spent his last night in hectic and fitful dreams. He was being attacked by a bear, but he had no gun, and the bear cuffed him about until he was exhausted. The bear got him down, and Isak kept trying to reach the sheath knife which hung from his belt. He made several attempts, but always the bear cuffed his hand away before he could reach it. Finally, when the bear was on top of him and making ready to finish him entirely, he got his hand on the long

knife and stabbed the beast in the heart. This dream Isak took as an omen of good luck: he read it to mean that the bear represented a terrible storm whose death signified that the Leviathan would once more weather the gale.

Isak told Ane of his dream, and they smiled over it together, taking it as proof of a successful season at Finmarken. Perhaps it was the dream that made this parting with husband and son less a thing of dread for Ane, as the prediction gave her reassurance. Leonhard dreaded her tears as he dreaded the thought of not having Margit there to see him off, but when the moment came he was surprised at his mother's cheerful farewell.

This trip was to be no child's play, and he was to have a major part in the undertaking, knowing for the first time in his life the reality of the fisherman's struggles.

As usual, the boats left in the dark of the early morning, and with the first rays of daylight Leonhard saw a little astern several sails white against the leaden background of the sky. Three boats—the comrade boats, they were called—usually sailed side by side, in case of trouble. Just now Isak's comrades were way ahead, having slipped by during the dark morning hours, but Isak knew that they would not go out of sight, but would wait for the Leviathan.

The wind was on the starboard quarter, and all hands on the Leviathan were called to manage the full sail. They began to take in the topsail. The boats behind were gradually gaining, and it was not long before they came abreast. Two of them sailed past, one on each side. They were brand-new big *femboring* ten-oar boats from Helgoland,

much larger than the Leviathan, and they slid by her majestically. Two younger members of their crews made game of the slow sailer, and began swinging the ends of rope, asking if the Leviathan needed a tow. After they had glided by, Leonhard turned to his father with an air of injured pride.

"Father, you must get a new and faster boat. It is a shame the way they are leaving us behind."

Isak, a man of long experience, smiled. "Son, did you see the boys on the new boats laughing at us?"

"Yes, I did; and I don't like it."

"And did you see me laugh?"

"No; you did not like it either."

"Let them jest, the youngsters. The day is young yet. It will be a long pull and it is far to Hammerfest. Look there to the east. You see the little group of white clouds like a puff of smoke over the top of the mountains?"

Leonhard looked in the direction where Isak was pointing. "Yes, and what of them? Surely they are harmless."

"Harmless? Well — perhaps. I am afraid, son, before you are at Hammerfest you will be initiated as a fisherman."

Isak looked ahead and saw Uncle Henrik's boat far in the distance; it was distinguishable among the other boats by the new strips of canvas on the sail. The wind was freshening from the north and Isak ordered a reef taken in. The choppy sea was spraying over the men in their shiny oilskins. Isak again pointed, this time to a piece of land far to eastward.





"You see that cape way yonder? Before we get there we shall have to take in two more reefs, and after we pass it we shall get the wind more to the side. We shall make Hammerfest without tacking unless we have to seek shelter."

Three more boats overhauled them. Then suddenly on the top of a wave a big sea came over the starboard rail amidships, half filling the boat. Isak shouted to one man to let the sail down, and Leonhard and the rest pumped and bailed. They took in two more reefs of the sail and the course was changed. Isak caught Leonhard's eye and smiled as he settled back and headed the Leviathan on her new tack.

"I can feel the old girl has changed her mood. She steers as easily as a toy boat in a washtub. Now you watch those three boats just ahead of us."

Leonhard kept his eye on them whenever he had time. Every man had his hands full with his allotted job. The spray was coming over the starboard bow and into the open boat, making it necessary to bail, bail, bail.

It was not long before the Leviathan crept up on the three boats ahead. One by one she picked them up, then she was abreast, and gradually she slipped by. The storm was growing steadily worse and Isak ordered another reef to be taken in. Sometimes he would steer too much into the wind and the whole boat would shiver and shake as the big sail flapped with a roar like thunder.

It was hard for the crew to hear Isak's commands above the rage of the storm. But their captain was in the best of spirits and for all the spray his face wore a smile of satis-

faction as he held the tiller in one hand and in the other the *skaut* or sheet which he let out when the boat keeled over too much.

His eagle eye saw everything — the sail, the breakers, the course, and the man on the lookout. Leonhard stole glances at his father as if he were seeing him for the first time. He was thrilled and proud of the way he handled the boat, taming her into obedience and bringing her to heel. Once Isak caught him looking toward the sails ahead.

“Now, son, you will see the smart alecks who laughed at us this morning. We are getting close to them now.”

Leonhard turned back to his work and said nothing. It was about four in the afternoon when the Leviathan pulled alongside the last of the boats. Isak cast a contemptuous glance in its direction. In a lull of the wind Leonhard heard Isak speak again.

“That skipper must be a young fellow and without much experience. I believe he wants to race, and he is letting out more sail. He cannot keep up with the old girl, and I know it. This is no weather to play in, son — remember that; it never pays.”

For some time they sailed side by side, but gradually the Gray Goose was nosed out and the Leviathan forged steadily ahead. Isak was concerned about the foolhardiness of the youthful skipper in the other boat. He kept careful watch of the Gray Goose, manœuvring about a boat's length astern.

“They're carrying too much sail and they're crowding that boat too hard,” he said as if to himself; and to be

doubly sure of his crew's safety he gave orders to have the sail reduced still more. The roar of the storm was terrifying. Every man's nerves were on edge, for a little mistake in handling the sail or rudder spelled disaster.

The men were bailing for dear life, and only Isak still wore his smile of satisfaction. Occasionally when the boat lifted itself and gracefully skimmed over a giant comber he made flattering remarks about the "old girl" to the man nearest him. Isak loved his boat, and when she performed well he beamed with pride. He loved this life, he loved to fight the elements to a finish, and his faith in the Leviathan was unflinching.

The Gray Goose was by now six boat lengths behind. Leonhard thought he could hear a faint shout coming through the storm. Isak too heard the cry from the Gray Goose. She was floundering and the flapping sail was being lowered. Isak instantly took in the situation.

An order was hurled into the teeth of the storm: "Lower sail!"

It was plain to all that the Gray Goose was in trouble. There was nothing to do but go back, and it was only by miraculous handling and good luck that the Leviathan was able to turn back and sail past, manœuvring for a position to save the men. She was already low in the water, and all hands were bailing desperately. Trunks with food, and gear, were floating around in the boat. Luckily there came a moment of calm when no waves broke over the distressed craft, and the crew were able to bail out a good deal of water. It became apparent that if the lull kept up long enough the crew of the Gray Goose would be able

to bail out enough of the water to make help unnecessary. Already she was rising higher, and her companion boats were not far astern. One man paused only long enough to signal "out of danger" to Isak, and the Leviathan turned once more on her course for Hammerfest.

Gradually the wind blew itself out and the water became smoother. Late that night they reached port. Isak was watching Leonhard carefully, considering what had been the effect on him of his rough day at sea. The boy looked tired and cold, but no different from the rest, and Isak was pleased that he had detected no signs of fear in him throughout the voyage.

The Leviathan's comrade boat, piloted by Uncle Henrik, came in long after, proving once again Isak's superior handling of a much slower boat. The next day was spent in mending a leak in the Leviathan's hull. It was pulled up on the beach, and crowds of men from the crews of the other boats gathered around, examining and studying its lines and construction.

The day following, long before it was light, the Leviathan and her crew put out for Hammerfest. It was a fine morning, with the northern lights playing in the sky. The wind blew quarterly from the stern, so they made good time.

Calm, cold days prevailed until the Leviathan glided into Honningsvåg. Its crew was among the first to get busy at the tasks of the winter fishing. Barracks were hired and the gear moved ashore. This time Leonhard did not work on land, but shared the hardships with the other men. If he had labored on his first fishing trip, now he sweated and



froze alternately, suffering such cold and fatigue as he had never thought possible.

At first the cod were not running, and there was nothing to do but sit and wait until the fish should come in. They played cards to pass the time and cracked jokes to keep up their hopes, and it was not long before mischief led to gang fights. Soon, however, word came that great schools of smelt and cod had set in close to the coast further north, and with this the fishing fleet was filled with a nervous energy that accelerated scores of boats into action.

They commenced to pack up and sail northeast in a feverish excitement, each eager to get there first. Isak and Uncle Henrik set out before daybreak. On the East Sea they met boats from many fishing stations that had also received the news. When day came they sighted sails as far ahead as the eye could see.

Dawn revealed threatening clouds, with the wind increasing alarmingly. As Isak took quick survey of the sky his face showed concern. He said nothing, however, but began examining every rope and knot in the rigging. New rope was substituted for doubtful parts, and everything was made shipshape before the storm broke. They began shortening sail as the first snow squall came up. They could see only a few yards around them, and they seemed to be alone in a great ocean.

The snow squall lasted for an hour or so; then the wind tore a hole in the clouds and soon they could distinguish Uncle Henrik just ahead, and a scattering of boats to leeward. The wind was on their starboard quarter and the sails were reefed in every visible boat. The storm kept in-

creasing in its fury and the men scurried busily over the slippery deck. Their hands grew red and swollen from the frozen ropes and rigging.

Then the *bolgedemper* was brought forth and oil poured on the waters. The oil temporarily quieted the choppy sea and helped to lessen the force of the waves. The salt spray froze to everything it touched. Yet soon again the wind whipped the ocean to a white foam and the water was torn from the tops of the waves, battering the little Nordland boats until it seemed that they must all founder. The Leviathan still carried some sail, but most of the boats were running before the wind with only a bare mast. It was a terrible day. Isak touched Leonhard's arm.

"Look there to windward."

Leonhard looked, but, half blinded by the stinging salt spray, he could see only mountainous waves.

"You do not see what I see?"

Leonhard shielded his eyes and looked again.

"Now I see—it is a boat turned over, and there is wreckage floating around it."

"A boat indeed. We came too late to be of any use to them. They are beyond our help now. Nor will they be the only ones to go under to-day."

A silent terror was in Leonhard's heart as he stood there fascinated by the tragedy before them. The waves were breaking over the capsized boat. It took all of Isak's skill gained in years of experience to keep the Leviathan from a similar plight, but he was as calm as ever, and encouraged the men, telling them to stand to the pumps, for the steep

gray walls of Renbanken were in sight, rising up out of the fjord to the eastward. But they were still far away.

A dense snow squall swept down on them again and they could see nothing ahead or astern. Suddenly there was a crash. The Leviathan rammed something just over the rail to windward. It was another capsized boat, and but for the glancing blow the Leviathan would have torn such a hole in her side that she too would have sunk. Isak muttered, "The poor devils are drowned. It would be almost impossible to rescue anybody in such weather." The words had scarcely left his mouth when the lookout shouted, "Men riding the keel ahead to leeward!" Isak strained his eyes and looked where the sailor pointed, and saw four men clinging to the keel of their overturned bark. Isak swung the Leviathan about.

"Lower sail. Have ropes ready to throw them as we go by."

The ends of the ropes were knotted to keep them from sliding through numbed fingers.

"We'll hit her on the leeward. All hands ready with ropes! Each man choose one of the four. Remember it is seconds that count!"

The gale was driving the Leviathan ahead at a furious speed, and Isak strained at the tiller to bring her so close to the wreck that she would all but grate on its upturned surface. Just as they came alongside a giant comber lifted the wreck up higher than the rescuers and one of the men rolled over the Leviathan's rail and into the cockpit. He was as still as death, totally unconscious after the strain.

One of the others grabbed a rope of the rigging and was dragged through the water before he climbed over the side. The other two caught the rescuers' ropes. One was pulled in easily hand over hand. But the last man had to hold on for dear life. It seemed impossible to haul him in, and for a time it looked as though he were lost, buried in a great wave at the end of the rope. But he hung on, and in a few seconds reappeared, skimming along the surface like a big fish on a trolling line. Leonhard added his strength to the rope. Slowly but surely the last survivor was raised over the rail, just as a breaker hit the Leviathan and half filled the cockpit.

Again it was the long-experienced Isak who saved his crew, for he pulled up the sail with mighty jerks; the boat turned before the wind and shot ahead under pressure of the forced sail, so that it literally slipped out from under the water in the cockpit. With great force the water swept out over the stern, and the Leviathan, relieved of the weight, rose up again to vanquish the next sea. So they weathered the storm, until the cockpit was free of its watery burden.

Attention was now given to the survivors. Two of them had recuperated and were able to help with the bailing. The two others were rolled in the sheepskin robes and bundled into the little cabin to keep warm until they recovered. The two rescued men worked like demons, trying to forget the tragedy through which they had just passed. The crew of their little boat had originally been six, but when it swamped one went under and was never seen again, and another got on the keel but was soon

washed off and was not able to keep afloat with the weight of his heavy boots and oilskins. They had thrown him a rope, but it slid through his hands as a wave struck, and that was the last they saw of him.

Uncle Henrik kept as close as he possibly could. In the heavy squalls he would disappear from view, but when they cleared away, there he would be, crowding more sail to keep up.

The two additional men were a helpful addition to the Leviathan's crew, especially with the bailing, as Olaf Oleson had strained so hard he had burst a blood vessel in his lungs and had lapsed into unconsciousness.

The storm grew more terrifying, and Leonhard felt that even his father was powerless now. They passed one more overturned boat, and it seemed, as the towering seas broke over the stern, that they themselves could be saved only by a miracle. Isak was not smiling now; he stood with his back against the cabin, tiller in hand, fighting for the life of his crew.

Above the gale Leonhard called to his father: "Look, there is land!"

Isak shifted his gaze from the death riding hard on their stern to the direction where Leonhard was pointing. With new courage he shouted to the crew: "See there what the boy has discovered — Nordkyn! Just around that point, and we are in smooth waters."

Olaf had now come back to consciousness. He was white, exhausted and terrified. "We shall never reach it," he moaned.

Isak's retort was short. "You are right; we shall not if



we all snivel like women. Get in the cabin, Olaf; you are not yourself."

The miracle happened. They battled their way around the cape into the lee of the sheltering island and calm water. Isak made the boat fast with two anchors and a "shore line." Other survivors of the storm kept coming in. There were few words exchanged. The men were spent, and saddened by the tragedies they had seen, and now that they were safe the sleep of exhaustion soon overtook them. The Leviathan put three of the rescued men on other boats, as there was room for only one extra in its cabin.

The bedding and the clothes were wringing wet — but who cared? They built a roaring fire in the little stove and made a pot of coffee, and then each man dropped off to sleep as he was, in his wet clothes. The heat from the stove made the little place like a steam bath, but never did men sleep better.

Leonhard, wet as the rest, settled down in drowsy peace. They had escaped death that day only by the greatest possible strain on brain and muscle. Now they were away from the roaring ocean in a little sheltered nook with two good anchors and a strong shore line holding them fast. The wind whistled through the rigging and the fire crackled cheerily in the stove. They were tucked away in a warm cabin, safe and contented.

In a world growing dreamy, Leonhard heard the anchor chains rattling on the incoming boats, the sails flapping, the men shouting, and the waves lapping the sides of the Leviathan. Then sleep.

The next day the storm had not abated, and the men spent the time in going over the boats, in drying out wet clothes and bedding, and in visiting neighboring Nordlanders and comparing accounts of the previous day. Each one had tales of sadness and tragedy; each thanked his lucky star that he was still alive.

Toward evening Jafet Knutsen, an old gray-haired captain, anchored close by the Leviathan. Tears mingled with the salt water running off his weather-beaten cheeks. Isak called over to him in jest in an effort to cheer him up. "How now, Jafet, must you weep because you have come safely to port?" In a moment he wished that he had held his tongue, for the older man gazed out toward the graveyard of the fishermen as though he had not heard the jest. One of the crew spoke up: "Jafet is in no spirit for jesting — nor are any of us, for that matter." And then he told them how disaster had overtaken Jafet's son. Before the old man's eyes his boat had overturned and been swamped. Jafet had done his best to save his boy and the crew. They had sailed across the keel of the wreck and saved five of the seven, but his son was not among them. He had been washed from the keel just as his father's boat came up. He clung to a rope and climbed back on to the keel, but it was too late — Jafet's boat had already slid past and was out of reach. For hours the old man had tried to turn back, but the storm was so terrible that he could not carry sail enough to tack, and his ship drifted further and further away all the time. After twice being nearly swamped he had had to give up the attempt and to look on powerless as his son disappeared among the frothing waves.

By the time the man had finished his story old Jafet had crumpled to a heap in the cockpit, while the eyes of the listeners were lowered on their own work and big mittened hands brushed tears from hardened cheeks.

The storm had taken its toll, tragedy after tragedy, and Leonhard turned from the merciless ocean with a feeling of revulsion. He swore to himself that this life should never be his future. Alaska, perhaps, but never Norway. The accounts of the Alaska fishing which he and Linken had studied did not reveal such terrors. He would see it through this time, but it should be his last trip to the fishing grounds of Norway.

After three days they set sail again in fine weather and arrived in Honningsvåg, where they were lucky to get quarters on land only two miles from the main harbor. The day of their arrival the fishing was in full swing. Seines were hauled in with boatloads of smelt. The fish were running thick and over three thousand hooks were baited on the long line. The next day they got as much cod as the boat could hold. Leonhard rowed back and forth with the precious loads until his hands were bleeding.

Prices were high, and the men worked night and day while the fish were running. The school was in close to the rocky beach, and the old fishermen knew they would not stay long. After the nets were hauled in the fish had to be cleaned and sold. They were distributed by actual count, which alone was job enough for one man. The cooking of an occasional cod fell to Leonhard's lot. Dur-



A LAPLANDER WITH REINDEER



FISHERMEN LEAVING SKJERVØY

ing the day the meal consisted of heavy slices of black Russian rye bread with butter and cheese and black coffee, and the men grabbed a bite as time allowed. If there was any cold cooked fish left from the night before, it too formed part of the day's rations. There was also sour milk, brought in kegs from home, which they used sparingly.

After the day's fish had been cleaned and sold and the hooks baited for the morrow, Leonhard would prepare an evening meal of fresh cod or halibut, boiled livers, heads, and roes, with boiled potatoes; then a pot of hot strong coffee. Most of the men had some of the lefse still hidden in their little trunks, and this made a choice morsel for desert. As they ate their lefse the men grew quiet and pensive, thinking of those who had made the delicacy.

After the evening meal it would be time to go out again. There were nights when Leonhard was so tired that he dropped off to sleep between the oars, and the older men had to throw salt water in his face to revive him. It was the custom among the hardiest to spit a stream of tobacco juice into a man's eyes to wake him. It smarted and stung, but at least sleep was forgotten. Whatever the means, every man must be kept on the job.

Every man was overworked, but no one wanted to be the first to give in. One evening, after four days and four nights without rest, Leonhard had finished cooking the fish and potatoes and was about to dish them up on the tin plates. He sat down for a moment on a rough bench near the stove. When the men came in later they found him there fast asleep on the floor, and the food cold. The



older men smiled and tried to wake him. "Let him sleep," Isak said, and he lifted his son into his own bunk, leaving him there to rest.

The following day the men got their first sleep, which lasted well on into the next afternoon. The cod were no longer running in close to shore, and the boats had to go further out each day. They were still kept well supplied, but it took longer to get out to the grounds, and the rowing was a cruel trial at the end of a long day. But Leonhard's hands were toughened now and they no longer bled and stuck to his mittens. Every day they ventured further out, until finally they were caught in a storm, nearly equal to that which had wrought such havoc earlier. Olaf got pneumonia and died. It was as if his experience in the East Sea had been a forecast of his destiny, for he had weak lungs, and this was the end. Yet for all their sorrow it was an excellent fishing season, and the men were kept cheerful and happy at the thought of success.

With the first days of May the old restlessness stirred throughout the fishing grounds. Isak had decided upon the day for departure and everything was in readiness for the home voyage. They started forth in glorious spring weather, with a fine strong breeze and sunshine twenty-four hours a day. Leonhard now took the tiller while Isak rested in the cabin or sat beside his son, and they talked of many things.

Isak thought of the day when he would no longer be with his son, when Leonhard would be head man of his own boat. But it would not be the Leviathan — probably a fine new cutter. There had been a few in Finmarken,

and now off to the port side Isak called Leonhard's attention to one with schooner rig.

"That is the coming boat. They can never beat the Nordland boat for riding out a storm or for easy sailing, but the square sail will go, and with it the relic of the Viking boats."

In answer Leonhard spoke what had been in his mind since the voyage in the East Sea.

"Father, could n't we move to a warmer country? I don't believe I shall want to spend my life at sea. America, perhaps. There are many people going there."

Isak answered his son quietly as he looked out over the water.

"I am too old to go, but some day you may try, when you have made your masterpiece as a blacksmith. I shall not keep you when the time comes."

At noon they came to Hammerfest. It was the same as before — the harbor was full of boats and the fishermen were going ashore in hundreds. The saloon, as always, did a rushing business. Gang fights were common, and as usual Uncle Henrik had his troubles. He had in his crew a big Finn who had walked from his home in Finland overland to Norway. He was powerfully built, and Henrik had made him one of his crew although he lacked experience as a sailor. He was a quiet man and adapted himself quickly to the life of the fisherman, and on various occasions displayed enormous strength.

Leonhard and his father had just finished shopping for presents for those at home and had started back to the boat, when they were halted by a crowd of people near the

wharf. Coming closer, they saw that the town boys had tackled some fishermen. Henrik's crew were among the fighters.

"There are some husky men among those fishermen," Isak said, "but the town boys are too many for them. Big Thor Aslaksen and Peter Remberg are with the town gang, and it will go hard with those opposing them. Many a good fisherman has been abused at their hands."

By this time the combatants were throwing cordwood or anything they could get hold of. More fishermen were joining in the fight, but the town boys were also coming from all directions, and they had the fishermen backed up towards the dock. As Leonhard and Isak came closer they saw Sigwart, Uncle Henrik's big Finn, apparently trying to get away from the fight. Thor Aslaksen was shouting, "Let me get hold of that big coward — I'll throw him off the pier, and we'll see how well he can swim."

So saying, he brushed the other men aside and rushed for Sigwart. Sigwart did not understand Norwegian, so he did not know what was coming until Thor was within striking distance. Sigwart then struck out with his big arm and sent Thor sprawling on the planking. Thor was up in a flash and flew at Sigwart again, but the result was the same. More town boys jumped in, but they could not get near, as Sigwart's long arms whipped and lashed the crowd. Peter Remberg finally got near enough to make a kick at Sigwart, who in turn grabbed him by the leg and whirled him round and round against the army of town boys, who went down like ninepins.

The fishermen then made a rush and drove the town

boys back up the streets, spurred on by Sigwart, still dragging Peter Remberg. Sigwart now hurled Peter through the air out over the pier and into the water. Thor was on his feet again, and he came at Sigwart with a great piece of cordwood and struck him on the head. As he staggered he grasped Thor in his arms. They fell together. Thor struck and fought like a tiger, but gradually Sigwart overpowered him, and, getting on his feet, he rushed out to the end of the pier and tossed his man into the bay.

There were cheering and laughter as Sigwart looked down into the water and brushed the palms of his hands together in an attitude of utter unconcern, as if to wipe away the feeling of Thor's body. The job was finished, but wherever Big Thor tried to land he was greeted with taunts and jeers and immediately ducked by the fishermen. The last Leonhard saw of him he was clinging to the piles under the oily pier in a *mêlée* of seaweed, cod-liver oil, fish heads, and filth.

Such were the gang fights, and they were common occurrences wherever the fishermen met and clashed with the town rowdies. It was part of the game.

Isak was ready to set sail, but not so the crew. They had returned to the saloon to celebrate the victory, and it was late that night before they got under way. It was such a fine clear evening and so calm that boats would sail up and tie together while the men visited each other, sometimes sharing a friendly bottle or a pot of coffee.

The next day the fleet sailed into Skjervoy like a flock of white birds, and there was the usual tumult of greeting, and the usual sorrowful absence of those who watched

from a distance behind curtained windows. Leonhard scanned the group of people on the shore and his mind traveled back to his last home-coming, when Margit had been there. Would she by any chance have returned from Christiania, he wondered. But she was not to be found.



## II

### THE BLACKSMITH

It was a warm summer night in July 1893 when the little island of Skjervoy woke from its peaceful dreams in feverish excitement. Leonhard and his brother Sigurd were asleep in their little room under the eaves when they were awakened by their father shaking them.

"Come, get up. There is a strange ship anchored in the harbor. See if you can recognize her."

The three went to the open window and looked out.

"She looks like a ship I've seen before," said Leonhard. "Could it possibly be the polar ship of Dr. Nansen? I've seen it in pictures. Yes, I'm sure it is the Fram."

They crowded nearer for a better view. They could now see a small skiff with two men in it rowing out from the shore. These men shouted something to the crew on the larger vessel, and almost immediately pandemonium broke loose on board. There was cheering, and the clamor of men running back and forth. A cannon boomed.

"They are like a lot of lunatics," laughed Isak.

Leonhard and Sigurd dressed themselves quickly and tore down to their little skiff, which was pulled up on shore, to row out. Isak called after them:—

"Take some beer and new potatoes with you."

When Leonhard returned, Isak helped him forage for the beer and potatoes, which were put into a big basket.

"If those fellows have been in the Arctic for three years, this will be a welcome sight."

And so it was that Leonhard brought the survivors of the expedition their first beer, with which they noisily drank his health. The excitement on board the *Fram* was accounted for by the message they had just received that Nansen had arrived safely in Vardö, after his crew had given up all hope of his return.

Nansen had planned to drift with the currents across the North Pole, but after a year in the ice he found that the Arctic currents were actually carrying him far to the south. He decided, therefore, to leave the *Fram* in command of Captain Sverdrup, while he planned a dash to the Pole by dog team. Thus the *Fram* had drifted on without news of Nansen for over a year. When Sverdrup went to the telegraph station to announce the *Fram*'s arrival in Skjervoy he was told that Nansen had arrived only a week before in Vardö. Naturally there was rejoicing when he brought the news back to the ship.

After the departure of the *Fram*, Leonhard settled down again to the work in the blacksmith shop, relieved by frequent wrestling matches, which were to give him such an advantage over his adversaries in the years to come. His thoughts still turned toward Christiania, and after talking to his father it was at last decided that he should try to find a position where he could serve his apprenticeship in a shop preparatory to becoming a steamboat engineer. But at Christiania he found that jobs were very scarce. Since he

refused to return home, he accepted the only alternative at the moment and set to work in a boiler shop. It was dirty work, repairing old boilers — crawling inside, scraping and cleaning and knocking off the layers of salt that had formed on the metal.

The first thing he had done when he arrived in Christiania was to find Margit. Quite by chance — for he had not told her he was coming — they met in a large café, where she was a waitress. She was the same sweet Margit. It was she who encouraged him when he could not find work. She comforted him, and shared with him the money she had earned. When her work was over they would spend the evenings together sitting in a little corner of the café laughing over their troubles.

He emerged from the boiler shop at night with his lungs permeated with salt, oil, rust, and dirt. For hours he had to crawl around on his hands and knees or lie on his back, his only light a smoky oil lamp which choked and sickened him. The noise of the pounding and riveting was deafening. One day he was helping to build the hood of a big ventilator when a fifty-kilo steel file fell and smashed his foot. This meant laying off work for a while. During his convalescence he spent his time with Margit, who was dearer to him now than ever before.

In the evenings they planned their future. But this work in the boiler shop was not for one who was used to the out-of-doors. By a turn of luck he was rescued from the foul air, filth, and din. The biggest blacksmith shop in town, which specialized in fine pieces of wrought iron, lost one of its apprentices. Hearing of this, Leonhard

applied to the shop for permission to make his masterpiece, as was required of any tradesman who wished to have a shop of his own in Norway. To his joy, he was accepted.

He went to work making birds and flowers out of iron and setting them into gorgeous candelabra, ornate gates, and so forth. He liked this work; it was what he had practised in a small way in his father's shop. But he had first to pass through his initiation: the other workmen mimicked his country dialect and teased him because he was small. They took advantage of his good will and happy disposition, but never reckoned with the fact that though he was small of stature his muscles were as strong as steel.

He was the only country boy among the eight, all of whom were older and bigger than himself. Each morning when he arrived they would imitate him in his own dialect, and all during the day someone would try to make game of him. It was hard to endure. One day the bubbling cauldron boiled over. It was at the lunch hour that one of the city boys called out: —

“Hi, codfish, how do you manage without seal meat and whale oil for dinner?”

Leonhard's temper flared up. “Mind your own business,” he muttered.

“The same to you, codfish.”

So saying, the tormentor landed a stinging blow in Leonhard's stomach. It came unexpectedly and with terrific force. Leonhard crumpled up and fell to the floor. The boy who struck the blow joined in the laughter that fol-

lowed. He was a great deal bigger than Leonhard, and though his companions actually did not like him they were a little afraid of him. When Leonhard came to, he was greeted with more jeering.

“Ho, ho! The fish is ready to swim again. They say you are the strong man of the North. Come on and match grips with me!”

Here was a chance for Leonhard to test the strength of his adversary and find out what he was up against. Though still shaken by the blow, his anger urged him to the trial. A place was cleared on the workbench and the contestants went at it. They faced each other and gripped hands across the board. Leonhard's strength seemed suddenly to have doubled as slowly and painfully he forced his opponent's arm down until the back of the clenched fist touched the table.

The boys were surprised, and secretly a little pleased, at Leonhard's success, for more than one of them had been bullied by Uberg. The latter laughed away his defeat sarcastically. “You see, boys, what a little herring and cod-fish will do for a fellow.” But underneath he was seething with hatred for the young blacksmith who had defeated him. Till now no one had dared to dispute him.

Uberg had made a name for himself wrestling, and thereby he saw an opportunity to conquer his man and raise himself to prominence once more. With his size and weight he could see no chance for the young Northerner. The following day when the master was out he called down to Leonhard:—



“ Say, halibut, you want to wrestle? ”

Leonhard knew his game; nothing suited him better. The boy next to him whispered under his breath: —

“ He is only trying to make a fool of you. You’re too light for him, and he knows it. Better leave him alone.”

“ Thanks, but I’ll take my chances.”

Leonhard climbed off the bench and they locked horns in earnest. Everyone expected a quick defeat for Leonhard. When they saw that he was able to hold his own they grew more interested. Work stopped. A ring formed around the combatants and the excitement grew intense. It was a battle royal, and the onlookers began to have the utmost admiration for the strength and speed of their small comrade from the North. They appointed a referee among themselves to see that he got a square deal. For a time Leonhard was content to save his strength and not try himself to the limit. Then as suddenly as a streak of lightning Uberg went down with a heavy thud, securely pinned with a half nelson and a hammer lock. His face was on the earthen floor, buried in pieces of scrap iron, cinders, and dirt. It was not time yet to turn him on his back. Leonhard was biding his time, playing to wear out the heavier man as he lay helpless. As he held his opponent down, there came the sound of the door creaking on its heavy iron hinges in the outer room. “ The master,” someone whispered. In a twinkling the fight was over: all rushed to their places at the bench and went serenely on with their work. The master pushed open the door and looked around. He was a tall, powerful man with long black moustaches and overhanging eyebrows. He looked

at the boys; then he stamped over to where Uberg was sullenly at work. He did not mince words.

"Uberg, what have you been up to?"

Uberg's face was bleeding and dirty and oozing perspiration. In a sulky voice he replied that he had been helping the chimney sweep. At the moment Leonhard was handling a big sledge, and though he too was out of breath and glowing with perspiration it was quite natural considering his work. But Uberg went into the black book.

For the rest of that day Uberg was seething. His throne was tottering. He could hardly wait for the next conflict. He would not believe that this little man could compete with him. He would wipe up the floor with Leonhard. His victim should be humiliated as he had been the day before. Nor were the spectators less eager. The next day at the noon hour they cleared a small ring in the yard and appointed a judge and a referee.

At the start each man put up his best efforts. For a while Leonhard took things easily, as the larger man was getting winded. Every dangerous hold Uberg tried for Leonhard eluded. The young blacksmith was so quick it was impossible to follow him. The onlookers were cheering openly for Leonhard now. He was fighting for his very existence in the shop: success meant peace and self-respect in the days to come. If he lost, the jests could not be endured. He ground his teeth in determination: it was sink or swim. At length Leonhard began his attack. He came in on Uberg with furious speed and cunning. There was a quick grapple, and suddenly Uberg spun through the air. He was down, his shoulders pinned to the ground.

That afternoon Uberg left the shop for good, and Leonhard became the recognized leader, gaining tremendous popularity among them all. Few cared to wrestle with him, and those who did never tried a second time.

Later Margit listened to Leonhard's story of the battle as they sat together in their little corner of the café. There was now no talk of marriage between them. The future seemed so very far away, and they were yet young. It was enough that they were together once again.

The days wore on, and at last Leonhard completed his masterpiece. Now — save for Margit — there was nothing further to hold him in Christiania, and he made up his mind to return to his father's shop, perhaps some day to take it over himself. It meant another painful leave-taking from Margit, but if ever he was to make enough money for them to marry it was time he got to work. When the day of his departure arrived Margit went with him to the station. There were promises of a speedy return. Nor were the tears all Margit's. She had been a wonderful friend and sweetheart, and it was a sad parting. It seemed as if each had a premonition that they would never meet again.

Less than a year later Margit was dead.

Not long after the shock of Margit's death had begun to dull, two of the Island boys returned from the Klondike with their pockets full of gold nuggets and with money to burn. One of them was Jafet Lindeberg, Leonhard's companion in the fishing grounds at Finmarken. He was apparently rolling in wealth, and intended returning for more. For Leonhard there were now no more ties to

Christiania, no more plans of marriage — Margit was dead. The young blacksmith felt he could no longer endure Skjervoy without her, and he was determined to leave. The newspapers which occasionally reached the Island gave glowing accounts of the gold strikes in the Klondike. Why not ask Jafet to take him back to Alaska?

Jafet consented readily enough, and chose three others as well. He furnished them with tickets and money sufficient for transportation to the other world. Since Jafet said it was beastly cold in this new country and warm clothing would be needed, Leonhard got together an outfit of hip boots to be used in mining gold, a sheepskin sleeping bag, several pairs of socks from his mother's needles, and a sufficient supply of woollen clothing. It was practically the same preparation as though he were off on a fishing trip. Ane wanted him to have a good outfit, as she doubted that one could buy clothing in that far-off country.

One thing loomed dark and ominous in the path of fortune: the possibility that Leonhard must spend the summer in compulsory military training. With fear and trembling lest he should be denied, he made his application for an extension and emigration permit. It took a long time, and day by day his visions of Alaska faded into obscurity. But finally the permit arrived. The day for departure came. He seemed willing to forget everything of the past: his youth turned toward the horizon of gold. Not until years afterwards when he had learned the caprices of fate and fortune did he realize what he had left behind.

There was probably no one who felt the pain of Leon-

hard's going more than Lisa. There was no one to whom the long winter evenings seemed more lonely. With mounting affection Lisa had watched Leonhard grow from boyhood into manhood; yet her devotion had passed unnoticed. To Leonhard she was just big, good-natured Lisa: no one would ever know how her heart ached for him.



### III

#### THE EMIGRANT

It was on a cold and stormy March morning that the fast mail steamer left Skjervoy for Trondhjem, carrying Leonhard as one of its passengers. At Trondhjem the emigrants boarded the boat for England. They traveled third class, sleeping in little penned-up quarters under the forward deck on rough wooden bunks, three men to a bunk. The food was impossible, and Leonhard dove down into his trunk, thankful for the delicacies his mother had prepared.

The boat followed along the Norwegian coast from Trondhjem to Bergen, where more emigrants and cargo were picked up. Among the passengers were a number of sailors from Bergen on their way to man English ships. They were a rough element; they drank heavily, and spent their time picking quarrels with the country boys from Norway. There were on board some farmer girls from Norway and Sweden. The sailors immediately tried to make their acquaintance, often forcing themselves in where their advances were unwelcome, and usually bringing on quarrels with the girls' brothers or sweethearts. There was a good deal of hard feeling, and a good deal of fighting.

There were mixed emotions among those emigrants.

There were fights in progress; there were lovers sitting together; there were raucous mischief-makers; and there were groups of homesick youths. One tall fair-haired Norwegian sat on a coil of rope watching the mountains recede from view. His thoughts traveled beyond the horizon. When the last mountain peak disappeared, the boy buried his head in his arms, sobbing like a child.

At this moment Leonhard happened along in a particularly jovial mood, but he stopped short at the sight of his brother emigrant and stood quietly by his side. He put his hand on his comrade's shoulder and spoke to him. "Don't grieve, my friend. We've cast our lot, and must stand by our decision." Both remained quiet a moment, until joined by a third. He was in a holiday mood.

"Hi, come on! There's going to be some fun between our gang and the sailors. Don't miss it."

Leonhard and his homesick companion pulled themselves together. Youth might be sad for a moment, but it loved a good fight. There had been drinking as usual, and things were in an uproar below decks. They stumbled over a stray loving couple as they found their way to the scene of action. Dancing had been in progress in a small floor space. One young girl with frightened eyes had refused to dance with a sailor, who then pursued her among the whirling couples. Her brother pushed his way through to her assistance, and the fight was on. One after another sailors and emigrants joined in, until it grew to a fair-sized riot. The girls fled in terror. Bottles were thrown; implements of any kind served as weapons. No one paid any heed to the officers and members of the crew

who tried to restore order. Then the fire hose was turned on, and the great stream of water, playing into the mêlée with terrific force, dispersed the fighters. There was an aftermath of broken arms and dozens of minor injuries which kept the ship's doctor busy.

The next day they arrived in England at the smoky and dirty port of Hull. There the emigrants were packed into a train bound for London. They saw nothing of London, however, as the officials took them off at a way station, where they changed cars. That evening they arrived at Southampton, and were herded like cattle to the emigration station to await the arrival of the S.S. St. Louis, which was to take them to the promised land. Here were gathered hundreds of emigrants of all nationalities.

In Southampton they had time to roam at will — and what sights there were for a country boy from Arctic Norway! Leonhard was bewildered by the confusion of the city, but more than all else he marveled at the “horseless wagon” — the first automobile he had ever seen. On their sight-seeing trips somebody was always ready with a practical joke. On one occasion a companion offered Leonhard a piece of red fruit, declaring it to be the most delicious thing he had tasted. Leonhard bit into it; then his face puckered up and instantly he began spitting it out. It was the first tomato he had ever tasted, and he did not like it. When the laughter subsided they told him how they also had had the surprise of their lives. Tomatoes had never been heard of in their part of Norway, and when they saw the luscious-looking red things in a window they bought a big bagful and fell to. The taste was so foreign to them

that they thought they had been poisoned, but when they found that the English people ate this strange fruit they believed they were safe in trying it on their countrymen.

After a few days the St. Louis pulled in and the emigrants were herded on board. It was a rough passage for the most part, and the men and women in the steerage were deathly sick. They would stretch out on the deck, trying to get a breath of fresh air and clear their lungs of the stench below. Sometimes a big sea would wash over the deck, soaking them and sending them sprawling against the side.

After the storm subsided the order came that every emigrant must pass before the ship's doctor for vaccination. Those who could show the scar of a previous vaccination were set aside, while the others formed in line and one after another were vaccinated. There was a farmer boy from Trondhjem who when the point was injected gave an unconscious jerk from the prick of the needle. The young doctor, irritated, looked up quickly and landed a smarting blow on the boy's cheek. The boy offered no retaliation, but his eyes flashed fire. When the injection was over he went quietly on his way.

Two days later the young fellow, who had bided his time, saw the doctor step out on deck. As quick as a cat he grappled with the officer, flung him to the deck, and, sitting on him, slapped his face from one side to the other until the doctor yelled for mercy. When the boy felt that he had administered sufficient punishment he got up and walked away. The doctor of course complained to the captain. But the emigrants were ready, and a Swedish

sailor, acting as interpreter, explained how the doctor the day before had struck the boy without reason. The emigrants stood together as one man, ready to resist any attempt at arrest, and no action was taken.

At Cherbourg another group of emigrants, from France, Italy, and Poland, boarded the *St. Louis*. The weather was calm now, and the Northerners and Southerners mingled in a great mass of hilarious humanity as they danced away the hours.

Leonhard found a little English girl and they danced together frequently, though neither could understand the language of the other. Leonhard finally consulted a Swede sailor and asked for a few words of English that he might speak to his dancing partner. The sailor taught him to say, "Sweet girl, give me a kiss." Leonhard rehearsed the words without the slightest idea of their meaning, and that evening tried his newly acquired English. For answer she replied coyly, "Not now," which necessitated more communication with the sailor to find out the meaning of her response.

So passed the voyage, until at last the famous shore line of America came into view. The rich might stretch luxuriously in their steamer chairs hardly noticing the approach of their home country, but these roughly clothed, bareheaded emigrants strained their eyes, full of expectation of what this land might hold for them. Some were frightened, some over-jubilant, some a little sad, but all were full of hope and ambition.

They were herded ashore at Ellis Island. There all were subjected to the various inspections, and had to show



that they possessed the required amount of money. They were then separated and sent through different runways, according to their destination. There was constant confusion, with loud voices shouting, "Get into line! Keep in the line!" though none but the English emigrants had the vaguest idea of what the words meant. Sheep or cattle would have received as much consideration.

To Leonhard it was revolting. Across the way a woman with a child in her arms was being rudely pushed into a line from which she had been squeezed out by sheer force. But he was too far away to interfere, much as he would have liked to. There was a boy of perhaps sixteen years with no other bit of identification than a tag dangling from the buttonhole of his coat. He was being told to "get into line," — which meant nothing to him, — and because he could not understand he was abused and roughly forced into place with a painful jab in the ribs. Little children of five or six years of age were sandwiched in between the excited grown-ups, crying in fright for protection. They too wore little tags of identification.

Near Leonhard stood an inspector whose duty it was to keep the line moving, which he tried to do by shouting, pushing, and the use of his knees. As he gave one woman an exceptionally rough push an emigrant just beside him reached out and grabbed a handful of his long black whiskers, giving them a powerful jerk. The official cursed and swore, but his whiskers were in a viselike grip and were being twisted with every oath he uttered. Thus he was dragged along until the line moved past a cross-rail, where his assailant released him after an extra hard tug.

He would have followed the emigrant, but the cross-rail prevented him.

Leonhard was seething inside. Was this America? Was this the country for which he had left his own peaceful Norway, full of enthusiasm? Was it possible that all Americans were like this? Prisoners of war were treated so, perhaps, but in the land of freedom . . .

The next move was to a ferryboat, where on the deck they were penned up in squares made of rope. Here again they were packed tight, held together by the ropes like great bunches of asparagus. Leonhard happened to be on the off side of the ferry and had no chance to see anything of the shore line of Manhattan and the skyscrapers of New York. He had read of them and dreamed of them, but he could not see them. He did see a narrow, steep little ladderway just beside him leading to the upper deck. He looked around quickly. There was no official or inspector in sight, so he forced the rope from his waist, ducked under it, and scrambled up the little ladder. Here above it was all open, and he could see the entire sky line and the harbor of New York. He leaned against the rail, forgetting everything except the marvel before his eyes. It was all he had imagined, and more. Little boats puffing up the harbor, ferries plying back and forth in their awkward dignity, and rising in the background the never-ending sky line of the gray buildings like uneven giant steps, some climbing up as if to reach the stars, others square and solid, but all in harsh symmetry against the evening sky.

Gazing on this new world, Leonhard was rudely brought to his senses by the sound of a shrill feminine voice at his

side. He turned to see a tall angular woman with a hatchet-like face. She had a broom in her hand and with furious words she gesticulated toward the stairs. Leonhard could not understand the words, but he got her meaning, though he pretended to be very dense. Suddenly he remembered the English phrase he had learned and with a twinkle in his eye turned to her saying, "Sweet girl, give me a kiss."

In answer she raised the broom and let it fall with all the strength she could muster on Leonhard's head. He was not hurt, only highly amused. He put on his best smile, bowed low, and repeated his phrase. This time she screamed and ran around the corner.

Leonhard turned again to the panorama before him. But he was soon interrupted, this time by a man's bass voice. He looked around to see a huge hulking figure in heavy rubber boots. Leonhard made a quick dive for the stairway, and as he did so the toe of the man's boot caught him with such force that his feet never touched the steps — he flew through the air, to land sprawling on his back at the bottom of the stairs in the midst of a surprised group of Poles and Italians. Leonhard's countrymen enjoyed the situation immensely. It was a naïve if painful introduction to his first American girl.

At Hoboken the emigrants boarded trains for their various destinations. No food was to be had except what could be snatched in railroad stations along the way, and there were no sleeping accommodations. Curled up in their seats, tired and exhausted, they passed through one state after another. After five days and six nights, worn

out, dirty, and hungry, they arrived at Seattle. In their eagerness to become American citizens, Leonhard and his friends went immediately to the Court House to file their first papers. They then decided to hire a teacher to teach them English, and his lessons they absorbed in earnest.

Leonhard was fascinated by the first Japanese he had ever seen, and after trailing him around the streets followed him into a Japanese restaurant which seemingly served an entire meal for ten cents. He seated himself at a table and without understanding anything that was printed on the menu he pointed at one item and took his chances on the result. The waiter could see that his patron was a foreigner, and so brought him what was apparently the most convenient of the "ready" dishes. It proved to be a sort of soup, though Leonhard was rather uncertain of its contents. He progressed bravely until he began to think of all the unappetizing things it might be. The substance in the soup was not meat; it appeared to be more like tripe cut into tiny pieces, and it grew more unpalatable with every spoonful. Somewhere he had heard that Chinamen ate rats, and he had no doubt that Japs followed the same custom. Surely for ten cents one could hardly expect more. It became so revolting to him that he left the bowl three-quarters full in front of him, paid his ten cents, and departed. As he was leaving the restaurant he met his friend the Swede sailor and questioned him about the dish he had ordered. He had been eating clam chowder! This was nearly as nauseating to him as the idea of the rats, for in Norway clams were not considered a fit dish for

human beings and were used only as bait. He never went to that restaurant again.

The Scandinavian population of Seattle consisted largely of sailors and longshoremen, who generally frequented the saloons and gambling dens, which were always on the lookout for greenhorns. One evening as Leonhard and his friends stood watching the games someone touched him on the arm. Leonhard turned to recognize a farmer from his own island in Norway. They conversed for a while and exchanged the latest news they had had from Skjervoy. Ole was a tall, awkward fellow, and as if to accentuate his clumsiness he wore a suit of homespun, which sagged here and bagged there and otherwise showed signs of wear. Leonhard and his friends had purchased suits of American style, but not so Ole. He had not invested his money on clothing; what was from the "old country" was good enough. He had spent some time working in the East before coming to Seattle, and had therefore accumulated a larger vocabulary of English, as well as a fair amount of money.

They were standing now watching the mechanical horse races, and the betting was fast and furious. Finally Ole, the slow-moving and slow-speaking, edged his way towards the gamblers and to the surprise of his friends began placing small bets. His odd make-up and rustic manner made him conspicuous among the slick gamblers, and the boosters of the game kept an eye on him. A stranger suddenly and apparently for no reason became very friendly and conversational with Ole.



"What do you think of this little game?"

Ole answered him in a slow singsong brogue: "Oh, she's not so bad."

The stranger's eyes never left Ole's face. "Are you winning?" he asked.

"Yes, considering the small bets I make," Ole replied, adding that he had decided if things kept coming like this he would raise his bets, but just for the present he was trying to learn the system.

"That's right, kid — better play careful. These gamblers are a crooked lot."

That night Ole went home twenty dollars to the good, and satisfied in his own mind that this was a game where it would not be so easy for them to cheat him.

The next day Ole went back. His luck continued, and he raised his bets a little. His friend of the previous evening was at his side, and again cautioned him.

"Of course," he said, "the game is square and all that, as far as I can see, but it never does for a man with small capital to go too strong. Remember, my friend, the house is never the loser."

Ole thanked him for his advice, and they apparently became great friends.

Sometimes Ole, who lived in the same place with Leonhard, would come to his room and tell him of his evening's winnings and of his friend's wise counsels. Before long all Ole's countrymen knew he was playing the horses, and they wondered how long it would be before Lady Luck would cease smiling.

One day Ole lost a little for the first time. His companion of the games advised him to stop playing unless he had plenty of money and could afford to take chances.

Obviously the gamblers could not account for this gawky country boy who every night walked home with money he had won. Neither could they figure out how much he had to lose. Ole told the friendly stranger that he had two thousand dollars in the Scandinavian Bank.

"If I was sure I could win again as I have so far, I would place the whole thing and double my money," he said in Norwegian to Leonhard. Then his eyes seemed to soften a bit. "I could go back to Norway and buy the farm of my sweetheart's uncle and we could be married."

Ole's friend turned his hawk's eye on him—he had overheard the statement, and seemed to understand enough Norwegian to comprehend what Ole was saying.

"That's a fine idea. Why don't you try it? See what you can do. If your luck is still running, you may as well clean up."

So saying, he walked away. Ole kept betting, and as his run continued he raised his bets higher and higher, winning at every shot. At length the stranger returned.

"How's luck?"

"Oh, fine—I'm winning on every bet. It's a sure thing. A little more and I'll go to the bank and get my cash. I can't lose."

The friend disappeared into the crowd again, and Ole kept cashing in. But soon his friend was beside him again. He touched him on the arm and whispered to him: "You'd better get the money while your luck is

running. I never saw such a streak. Let me know when you are ready, and I'll go with you. It would be foolish for a kid like you to go through the streets with so much money."

But Ole was not yet "ready."

A few days later Leonhard returned to the gambling house to watch the races. He had not been there long when Ole's friend appeared.

"Are n't you a friend of Ole Rask's?"

Leonhard said that he was.

"Well, why has n't he shown up here the last few days?" The questioner's manner was one of irritation.

"Well," Leonhard said, "the last I saw of him he was leaving Seattle. Where he has gone I do not know," he added truthfully.

The gambler cursed. "That was the slickest rube I ever was up against. He took six hundred dollars from my place — the damn Swede."

So much for Ole. It was not often that the emigrants beat the gambling houses, but Ole had the good sense to keep his money in the bank, and he left town with six hundred dollars winnings besides.

There were few in those days who knew enough to stop when they won.

To the boys one day was very much like another — a little studying of English, a little visiting of saloons and the gambling houses. They were eager to be off. All around them there was talk of gold, and that was what they had come for. There were so many gold seekers that it seemed impossible that there would be enough "pay

dirt " to go around, and they grew as restless as their fathers used to be at the fishing ground.

The first week of May, Lindeberg sent word that they were to sail on the S.S. Ohio. The day was gloriously warm and everyone was in high spirits, for they were on the last lap of their fortune hunt. Leonhard explored the ship from bridge to stoker's hole with keen curiosity. In his wanderings he stumbled into the smoking room. In the middle of the room a number of people were clustered together with their chairs tipped back and their feet apparently on a large table. Leonhard stood in the doorway greatly amused. The men were so close and there were so many of them that he could not see the table itself. He had often heard that it was an American custom to sit with the feet elevated on a table, but he had never seen it before. He knew now for certain that he was in America.

Leonhard shared a cabin with two big Swedes and a German. The ship ran into a three-day storm, and it was none too pleasant for Leonhard, as his companions were all seasick. There were no stewards to attend to them, and it was nauseating even for one who was not ill. One day after it had calmed down and they were a few hundred miles out of Dutch Harbor, Leonhard was standing on the hurricane deck when someone near by cried, "Man overboard!" He sprang to the rail, and as he did so he saw a man's head in the water and his hat floating alongside. The ship stopped immediately, life preservers were thrown over and boats were lowered, but all they were able to save was the sorry-looking hat. That night as they all sat in

the smoking room someone began asking questions as to the drowned man's identity. He proved to be one of the many who had sold a profitable little business in order to buy an outfit of mining machinery and equipment to mine gold on a big scale, expecting to get rich quick. But on the boat remorse crept into his mind and he began to brood on what he had done and what would happen if he were not lucky. At last he grew so desperate that he jumped overboard.

Leonhard listened to the calloused old-timer reeling off his story of the tragedy as if it were an everyday occurrence, and he began to have a few misgivings about this gold. Was it possible that after all they might not find the precious metal that was to make them all rich?

As they approached Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands they came upon a number of ships. Some had been up in the Bering Sea trying to get through the ice to Nome, but had been forced to turn back. For over a week the Ohio lay there, and Leonhard spent every day ashore, climbing mountains, seeing the country, and entering into the sports that were organized between the ships lying at anchor. A tug of war between the passengers was the favorite pastime.

In Dutch Harbor, as in Seattle, there were plenty of gambling dens, and Leonhard often drifted in to watch with the others. He could not afford to play, but the scene fascinated him. There were people of all nationalities and men of all professions there. The games were mostly poker and blackjack, in which the professional gamblers "cleaned the suckers." One day quite by chance



Leonhard noticed a very small, inconspicuous man in a poker game. He was modest and unassuming, and his speech was devoid of the gamblers' smart slang, but it was obvious that he was losing consistently. At last he very slowly and deliberately pushed his chair back from the table, and in a cool voice said: "This game is crooked. Watch out for that man there. We will now have a little settlement."

The guns flew up in the air, but the spokesman had his out as quickly as the rest and under the nose of the dealer, who was one of the owners of the game. But there was a fourth gun nobody saw. It was that held in the hand of one of the dance-hall girls, who promptly stepped up to protect her gambler friend. It was a common occurrence for these women to protect their sweethearts, though they received no thanks for their loyalty.

The gambler and the woman who saved his life migrated to Nome. It later happened that this same man was found beating the girl unmercifully. A bystander tried to interfere, but the moment her lover was attacked the woman whirled around and aided him in all but pulverizing her would-be rescuer. The women of those days stayed loyal to the men of their choice through thick and thin. They went through hell for them. The dance-hall girls and the women of the questionable districts of the gold towns have often been maligned. The truth is that, shady though their morals may have been, they were the best friends the pioneers had. It has always been so—wherever the men have broken through into a new country the women have followed.

Among the seekers for gold on board the ship were missionaries and priests, and, curious as it may seem, many a service was attended by the strange conglomeration of humanity. In the rush for gold the aristocrat rubbed elbows with the proletariat. The ships were anchored out in the harbor, so it was necessary to have fair-sized skiffs to take the men and women ashore. Men who had never seen a skiff were struggling to row in the same boat with old salts of the sea. On one of these trips Leonhard amused himself by passing occasional remarks in Norwegian to his two partners on the bad handling of the boat. The two men at the oars were having the greatest difficulty, and obviously did not know the first thing about rowing. From the black looks they directed at each other, and their angry voices, it was apparent that the relations between them were becoming strained. Leonhard grew freer with his remarks, until one of them stopped his rowing abruptly and turning to him said: —

“Young man, if you had been raised in the interior of Norway and had spent the rest of your time on the Minnesota prairies you would n’t do any better. Besides, who can work with this damn Turk from some desert in Asia Minor?”

At last the captain of the Ohio decided to start north. Soon the harbor was alive with ships getting in readiness to leave. The first day out they drifted into the ice, which became thicker and thicker until finally it stopped all progress. On all sides there were thousands of walrus basking and sleeping in the sun, and as the ship drew near they

would all plunge into the water at once, like trained animals in a circus.

The course of the ship was constantly changed. It manœuvred slowly, working its way between the ice floes wherever headway was possible, its bow nosing into any opening. Everybody on board was in a feverish hurry to get to Nome — to get there before the mob, to locate town lots and then gold claims, and to go to work mining the beach sands before the rush began.

Every time the ice closed in progress was halted and the nervous excitement and anxiety became more manifest. Finally, after days of waiting, they saw land, and the next day the anchor was dropped outside of Nome. As if they were fated to have their gold constantly held out of reach, a rumor now spread abroad that there were two cases of smallpox on the ship. This meant quarantine. During the night some of the men in desperation slipped over the bow and lowered themselves down into small skiffs which hovered around, and by paying exorbitant prices were taken ashore. One desperado slipped overboard and swam to a near-by buoy in the ice-cold water, where he was finally picked up by a boatman.

On board the Ohio everyone was packed and ready to go ashore when like a bolt from the blue came the news of the quarantine and the order to set sail for St. Michael, one hundred and twenty miles distant, where they were to wait until further notice.

Disappointment and gloom settled over the whole ship. There were boats in the roadstead that were unloading their hordes of gold seekers and fortune hunters, while all

Leonhard and his friends could do was to stand on the deck watching other boats come steaming in, their passengers fervently bound for shore.

Leonhard felt that a fortune had slipped through his fingers. At Egg Island, near St. Michael, they anchored, and the two poor souls who were supposed to have smallpox were put off on that barren island. They were given tents, stoves, and supplies, with someone to take care of them. Everyone felt that the "smallpox" was no more than a passing skin disease, and so it later proved to be.

Day after day the ship rested there, the six hundred passengers growing more and more restless and impatient. Bands of music had been organized earlier on the voyage, and they did their best to entertain the others, though material for amusement was wearing thin by now. Only the incessant card games went on day and night, and men who had never gambled before in their lives now sat in at the games. Some there were who had sold everything they possessed to buy their outfits. Some had brought all the paraphernalia for a restaurant, and provisions. Others had brought saloon fixtures and supplies of whiskey, and all the equipment belonging to the trade. There were also men and women on their way to run dance halls and gambling joints.

As day after day passed it began to look desperate for them all. Those who had reached Nome would already be set up in business and all the best locations would have been taken while these eager men and women were championing at the bit, growing more discouraged and disheartened. Committees were organized to call on the captain and try

to find ways and means of lifting the quarantine. Some begged and some threatened the old skipper, but it was of no use.

After a stay of ten days news came that the Ohio was to sail. On the fourteenth day of June they landed in Nome.



## SEPPALA TELLS HIS STORY

## IV

### THE MINER

NOME, the little gold city of the North, at last. And what an awakening for the prospecting immigrants! Green young hopefuls, sans money, sans experience, sans all but their youth and enthusiasm. Nome was crowded with humanity, living in tents for miles on both sides of the town. Wooden buildings sprang up overnight — places of business and saloon after saloon. The town was built along the beach line, stretching east and west, with the famous Front Street or Main Street running behind the first line of houses. The beach itself was piled with merchandise and lumber. Horse teams waded up to their bellies in the ocean to get around on the beach, while Front Street was jammed and blocked with other horse teams, dog teams, and pedestrians, all wallowing in mire in hectic confusion.

The tundra, or frozen swamp, stretched four or five miles from the beach to the foothills, and those who were not fortunate enough to find tent space by the water's edge scattered along the tundra where there was more room. Wherever there was any traffic the ruts became almost impassable for man and beast, and those who would not wait for the slow procession got into worse straits by trying to strike paths for themselves. Horses floundered helplessly about and had constantly to be pulled out.

My brother immigrants and I had no tent, and as everything was being sold at such prohibitive prices it was far beyond our means to purchase one. Most of the dwelling places were already filled to overflowing. After wandering around for days we finally took possession of a small one-room cabin belonging to some Laplanders, with a shed to serve as sleeping quarters. There were no beds or bunks, but we were glad enough to use our sleeping bags, and were grateful for the roof over our heads. There was nothing to do but wait for Lindeberg to find us available jobs. Meantime we contented ourselves with seeing the sights of Nome. The saloons and dance halls were doing a rushing business. The dance fee was one dollar. One's first move was to engage a girl and dance until the music stopped, when the "caller" would announce, "Everybody promenade to the bar." The couples then lined themselves up, and the man bought a drink for himself and one for the girl, at which time the dollar was paid. The girl then received from the bartender a small check showing her percentage of the miner's dollar. She received about one third, while the house kept the rest. Possibly, if the girl's partner had enough money, he danced with her again, following the same procedure; if not, she left him for another victim. Sometimes the miners in from the creeks would dance away a hundred dollars or more in a single night.

There was no style about them as they stepped off the dances in their rubber boots, Eskimo mukluks,<sup>1</sup> or digger's shoes. They danced in the same clothes in which they

<sup>1</sup> Mukluks are strong Arctic boots.



THE TENT CITY OF NOME, 1900



NOME IN MIDWINTER, 1907

worked. Only the smart bartenders and some of the rich gamblers wore gaudy clothes — and well they could afford to, for nearly every dance-hall girl had her favorite among them, and many a time after the night's dancing was over she would turn over her earnings to him. He in return probably spent them on some other girl — but that seemed to be all in the game. During the evening the miners often went upstairs to a room over the bar to gamble with the slick owners who bled them regularly at faro, roulette, blackjack, poker, or crap.

Occasionally the voice of the "caller" could be heard above the laughter and talking below, barking out, "A waltz — everybody take a lady!" and so on for the two-step, quadrille, minuet, or, best of all, the miner's favorite, the Virginia reel. There was fighting, but not with fists. In Norway it was considered cowardly for a man to hide behind a gun instead of relying on his own strength and taking his chances in a fair match. Here, however, the fear of the gun did away with what might often have developed into a general riot. There were plenty of good shots, and a man did not call for gun play unless he had good reason.

Finally word came from Lindeberg that there was an opportunity for work. The news was received with rejoicing; now we were actually about to become gold prospectors. My partner, Magnus, and I were given a team of frisky black horses hitched to a heavily loaded wagon and told to drive to Discovery Anvil, where the first gold had been discovered in the Nome fields. I had never driven a single horse or a pair — while Magnus, also a fisherman,



had never had reins in his hands. We bribed the stableboy to harness and hitch the animals, and I for the first time tried to drive.

We managed well enough as long as we followed the hard beach road, but out on the tundra the old story repeated itself — the horses went down in the soft mud and the wagon sank to the axles. Time and again we unloaded the wagon, carrying the burden by hand until we found more solid footing. Returning to the wagon, we would take the horses out and hitch them to the tongue, pull the wagon out, and then drive on to collect our equipment. At last we were about to abandon our efforts when a kindly prospector, knowing from many such experiences what we were going through, voluntarily came to our assistance. He sank in the mud nearly up to his waist, but he rescued us, and gave us new courage with his information that our destination was only a mile further on. It had taken eleven hours to cover the five miles to Discovery Anvil. The once prancing steeds now staggered with fatigue, and we were exhausted and ready to drop on our hard wooden bunks. So this was prospecting!

The next day my partner and I split forces. I was given the job of holding a slip-scraper which was used to clear away the tailing at the lower end of the sluice boxes. It looked simple enough, but the teamster kept the horses at a trot all the forenoon while I followed filling the scraper and then running behind and dumping it. Later I found out that the dumping was supposed to be the teamster's job. The tailing was fine, washed gravel, and I was often up to my knees in it, and always on the run. The job which

had at first looked so simple evolved into a herculean task, and after two hours I began to wonder how long I should be able to last. If I gave in I was done for. The teamster was obviously trying to play me out.

I had always had a sort of pride in the fact that although small I had been able to hold my own with others, but my pride was rapidly failing me, as I realized that I was now trying a job at which I could hardly last even for a day. I gritted my teeth and struggled on for another hour, but I felt that the end was close, for it was still some time to the lay-off at lunch hour. I should be humiliated beyond words if Lindeberg found that I was not able to hold a man's place. Besides, there were dozens of idle men standing around looking for work. Only a few jobs, and countless men for every one. When one man started to weaken, there were no questions asked—he was given his pay and a new man took his place. As I staggered along I began to realize I had made a fatal mistake in leaving the blacksmith shop in Norway for a job requiring nothing but the strength and endurance of an animal. I tried to console myself by reasoning that I was soft from a long journey and that I should gradually become hardened, but I knew in my heart that it was no use, I could never stand this pace.

Certainly I was no more encouraged when I saw one of the foremen speaking to the teamster, and though I could not understand much English I gathered what they were saying. Lindbloom was asking the teamster if he thought I should make good, and the teamster, pursing his lips as he emitted streams of tobacco juice, allowed that I should

not last long. But while Lindbloom was there the teamster did the dumping, as he was supposed to do. This slight intermission gave me a short breathing spell, but as soon as Lindbloom's back was turned I had to do the dumping again by myself.

I was stumbling and falling after the team, hardly knowing what I was doing, but I would not give up. Stubbornly I determined not to lose this first chance to make good. I had to earn enough money to pay back the three hundred dollars Lindeberg had lent me for my fare from Norway. Lindeberg had told me when I started that I should have to "hold my own" over here, and that it was hard slugging. I had felt that if others could do it I was willing to take my chances. But I now realized that it certainly *was* hard slugging.

Again there was a pause in the operations as the Italian foreman came down to the tail raise and spoke to the teamster. I wondered if it was all over with me, but the teamster merely began unhooking the scraper, and then started off in the opposite direction, motioning me to follow. The team was hitched to the stone sleigh and we drove off to the next claim. Here we began loading riffles and sluice boxes, which was far easier than the tailing. All I had to do was to help load and lash the stuff to the sleigh, then follow along beside the team. That took the rest of the forenoon. I ate my first dinner as a miner with one hundred and fifty other men in a big dining room, immediately after which I walked down to the pit and rested on the tailing pile until work started again. My hands

had begun to show the effects of the scraper handles — they were blistered and sore.

The teamster started off driving like a madman again. I was refreshed after my rest and the first hour I managed fairly well; then the work began to tell. Apparently there were no more sluice boxes to haul that day, and I was getting more and more exhausted. The teamster wore a broad smile on his face when toward evening at the edge of the old flooded pit the point of the scraper struck a rock and I, in my dazed and weakened condition, was thrown into the old pit, filled with silt from the sluices. I landed on my back and sank into the mushy, sticky ground. The more I floundered the deeper I sank. The teamster took his time to enjoy the joke, then nonchalantly threw a board to me, with which I gradually worked my way out. The silt and mud were stuck to my clothes like molasses, making them soggy and heavy, but at least the cold water revived my waning strength, and the few minutes' respite from the scraper gave me new energy with which to carry on for another hour. And now it seemed that the rattletrap scraper could no longer stand the punishment it was receiving owing to the teamster's pace; its mainstay broke, and the contraption had to be taken to the shop for repairs. The rest of the afternoon I was at work with a shovel. The day was saved.

The next day I again shoveled gravel into the boxes. My teamster had to find another helper, and it was then I learned that my tormentor had deliberately tried to wear me out so that the job might be open to a friend of his.

Discouragement and disillusion were on every side. Men who had never done a day's hard work in their lives toiled and struggled trying to earn enough money to leave the country.

Along Anvil Creek the claims became famous for their slave-driving bosses. New men were always coming and going. It was no use to ask for a second chance or to say that one only needed hardening to stand the pace. No excuses were given or taken. A man had to make good or get his time check. It was a case of the survival of the fittest.

The work day was ten hours long. At first the shovel seemed child's play to me after my day on the scraper. Opposite me was a man assigned to shovel the same-sized cut. I did well enough the first two hours, but soon it became apparent that the other's cut was growing bigger than mine. I could see that I was getting far behind, and any moment I expected my time check. Eventually the foreman sauntered over in my direction and calmly suggested, "Fill your shovel, boy — there's no danger of blocking the boxes."

In the afternoon my competitor worked like a machine, and was several yards of dirt ahead of me when work was called off that night. I was forced to admit that I had done all I could. My arms ached and throbbed and my blistered hands burned so that I could not sleep.

There was now no team for the tailing, and it had to be handled by shovel. Three men worked in the tailing clearing away the washed gravel from the lower end of the sluice boxes so that the continuous run of water and gravel





SHOVELING AT ANVIL CREEK



SLUICE BOXES AT ANVIL CREEK

should not be blocked. Each team of three men worked one hour, then changed places with another team in the pit. At the end of the hour the men would stagger to the cut after being relieved. By night my arms and hands were worse, and when the morning came I was in a sort of daze from fatigue. At noon I was told to go home and go to bed. They told me it was time for me to do some real work — I was to go on night shift!

Two of us bought a small tent and moved out of the bunkhouse. We rigged up a stove made out of five-gallon oil cans, by which we could dry our clothing, dripping wet after every day. My "old country" leather hip boots no longer proved practical: I stood in clay water throughout the working hours, and naturally had no time to keep them oiled. So I resorted to rubber boots. I had thought them ridiculous when I landed in Alaska, but now I readily understood why the miners discarded all other footwear for them. But though the rubber boots kept out the water, my feet were still cold and wet from perspiration.

My company were working at Discovery Claim on Anvil Creek, where they were getting from six to fifteen thousand dollars in a two-day run of each string of boxes. I saw gold dust and nuggets by the pan and bucketful. The company were "cleaning up," but they had their troubles, as every claim was jumped several times. The "jumpers" were the tools of lawyers and gamblers. The old-timers had no love for the lawyers, for previous to their arrival justice was satisfactorily administered by the miners themselves or by resort to the United States Army post which was established at Nome immediately upon the dis-

covery of gold. Hundreds of lawyers eventually drifted into the gold area, and with their arrival the first claim-jumping started. The majority of stakers and the majority of the discoverers were foreigners. The lawyers based their action on the fact that a foreigner could not hold claims in Alaska unless he had taken out his second papers of citizenship, which, of course, took five years to acquire. Several of those who held the best locations had only their "intention papers," so the lawyers reaped a harvest in depriving them of their claims. Between the offense and the defense the legal element got most of the gold, for which the young miners had endured untold hardships.

My employer was the leading figure in the fight for the recovery of the claims, and after a loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars he eventually succeeded in ousting the receiver and recovering what belonged to him. But today, thirty years after the prospecting struggles of Nome, there still lingers in the heart of the old-timer a contempt for those of the legal profession who wrought havoc with the community.

It is doubtful whether the recovery of the claims could have been accomplished if outside help had not been secured. A trustworthy man was selected and smuggled on board a boat leaving for the States to obtain legal advice superior to that of the shysters in Nome. Apparently a move of this kind had been expected, for the steamer was searched by marshals. If found, the stowaway would have been arrested under some pretense or other, but it happened that he was concealed in an air ventilator, where he had to stand for hours until the boat got under way. His

hiding place was not discovered, and he arrived safely in the States, where he succeeded in interesting some officials of the Government in the case. He returned to Nome eventually with high legal talent and documents which in the end led to the recovery of the claims.

One day Lindeberg came to me and asked me if I would go on a prospecting trip. The pay was ten dollars a day. I accepted readily, glad to escape the steady grind with the shovel. I was by far the smallest man in the gang, and it was hard to keep up with the big, raw-boned Irish and Scandinavians, with many of whom shoveling was a profession.

The prospecting party consisted of eight men and eleven horses. Burdened with our equipment, we made about nine miles on the first day. As I was leading my horse by a bunkhouse in a good-sized mining camp, there was the deafening report of a gun from within. I was perhaps five feet from the house, and my horse made a jump and reared. I could not stop to investigate, and, what was more, I was glad to be on my way, as I figured that whoever fired the shot might have been firing at me. That night the others told me that a man had shot himself in his bunk. He had brought a big equipment from the States, hoping to make his fortune, but the work was so desperately hard that he could not stand the pace, and had just taken the quickest way out.

On this trip I learned a good deal about horses, both from my own struggles and from the advice of the head packer, a skinny old Mexican. The Mexican and the men on the expedition who had supplied the outfit rode their

saddle horses, while the rest ploughed along on foot. The weather was fine and warm.

For two days we prospected at a small creek. We "crosscut" the creek, which means that a row of holes were sunk to bed rock a few feet apart across the creek bed to find possible pay streaks in the strata of gravel or on bed rock. But we saw nothing worth while, so we broke camp and traveled up Nome River into what is now known as Gold and Slate Creeks. There we had the same result. Along we went from day to day digging holes and never finding anything.

We were on the home stretch before the rain set in. Two men shared a tent. One morning I woke to find that the rain had penetrated my sleeping bag and that I was drenched to the skin. From then on there was rain with a cold freezing wind night and day. We worked and slept in wet clothing, with never a chance to dry it out. As there was no let-up, we concluded that the rainy season was on for good, and we started back for Discovery Anvil. When we got there the horses were turned loose and we went back to our respective jobs once again. I continued my shoveling in the night shift. All that September the rain never stopped.

The foreman over me now was a fine American. It was a privilege to know this man, who was fair-minded, honest, and exceptionally well read. I often talked with him during the midnight rest hour, and he taught me the language and ways of the new country. We had to work hard in this man's gang, but every one of the crew gave his best for the foreman.



For a month my arms and hands suffered terribly. My hands grew so stiff from holding the round shovel handle that I could not straighten them out, and on my fingers the calluses were thick and rough. The pain in my arms was beyond description, and during rest hours it was often impossible for me to sleep. When my arms burned with fever I would go out in the rain and thrust them into the cold water in one of the pits to cool them and so relieve the pain.

By September it grew dark very early. After insufficient rest, the men on the night shift would drag themselves to the pits, stiff and sore in every limb, dressed in oil-skins, sou'westers, and rubber boots, with coal-oil head-lights making a weak light. The rain never stopped. Some nights it would turn to snow. Our hands were numb from the everlasting handling of the wet pick and shovel; water ran in streams down our necks as we bent over, and trickled up our arms as we lifted them with each shovelful of gravel—a process repeated probably two thousand times in a night. It was a hard life. Men came, worked a shift or more, and left. Some did not last a single shift.

With the approach of evening I thought of the little shop in Norway and regretted that I had listened to the golden-tongued orators who had persuaded me to come to Alaska. But I had only myself to blame. I wanted adventure, and I was getting it. I had told my parents that I should probably be away four years, and already I was planning to leave as soon as I had enough money to pay my debt and my fare home. Life in Norway never seemed so sweet as when I toiled away the dark rainy nights shoveling. Often

when I awoke with my arms and hands burning with fever I would try to console myself with the thought that after all this life had one advantage over that of the Norse fisherman — we at least had ground under our feet, and not hundreds of fathoms of roaring Arctic Ocean. We worked harder here, and perhaps we should freeze just the same, but at least we should not drown. But it was small consolation to realize that I had left one God-forsaken country for another. If only the gold had not beckoned and I had been content to stay in Southeastern Alaska and fish as Linken and I had planned so long ago! Linken was still in Skjervoy, reading his books and studying his statistics. He had certainly been the wiser.

With daylight time passed more quickly. It brought a new hope that some day I should make a strike and life would be pleasanter. So much for the dawn of fancy!

After breakfast, which was supper for us relieved men, we would build a crackling fire in the little tent stove. It was so cozy in there that we would fire up and talk for hours while our clothes dried and the boys from neighboring tents dropped in and exchanged stories with us. Life took on a distinctly brighter hue, and our troubles were forgotten until we went to bed and the pain and fever returned.

One night about nine o'clock the foreman came to four other boys and myself.

"You fellows go up to the office."

We looked at him in dismay.

"Fired?"

"Not that I know of," he answered.

When we arrived at the office we found it full of men. Lindeberg was giving instructions.

"You are each to take a gun and go in couples to No. 2, Glacier Creek. Avoid all noise and try not to be seen. I will be at the southeast corner stake. Meet me there."

Some of us were handed shotguns, and others revolvers. My partner and I were given rifles. One of the boys started to speak, but Lindeberg silenced him before he could ask what we all wanted to know.

"No questions until we meet again at the claim. I will only say that no one need go who does not wish to."

No one dropped out. We left in couples at ten-minute intervals and walked the six miles in the pitch-black night. Finally we stumbled on to the meeting place. Four men were there ahead of us, and soon more came. We sat around waiting for Lindeberg, and when he arrived the little army gathered around him for further instructions. He gave orders for five men to go to each corner stake, to resist any attempt to put down new stakes, and, after proper warning, to use guns if necessary. Men were placed at other portions of the claim. I was sent to watch at a long drain ditch that ran along the lower end of the claim. Where I was posted the ditch was deep, and my orders were to stop anyone from advancing through it. Lindeberg had learned that the claim in question was to be jumped by the shysters and their gang, so he had come to defend his property.

At my post both sides of the ditch were piled with the gravel that had been thrown out when it was originally dug. I lay there quietly for a long time waiting for some-

thing to happen. It was damp on the gravel and I shook with the cold. Suddenly I thought I heard something move in the ditch. I crawled over the gravel pile the better to see down the long trench-way, and as I did so the gravel began slipping and I with it. With a crash I landed on top of a man who was crawling on his hands and knees up the ditch. My rifle, which I was clutching with both hands, happened to hit the man on the head, and he went down with a grunt. In the darkness I saw more men close up, one within striking distance. I jumped up, swinging my rifle in the air, and ran through the ditch giving the alarm. There was a scuffle and several shots were exchanged. We tried, as things grew quiet, to find the man who had been hurt, but evidently his companions had dragged him away. We could hear shots at the northwest corner of the claim where the jumpers had made another attempt to place stakes, but they were driven off. Lindeberg and his men, who were watching the southwest corner, captured three men attempting the same trick. They were ordered to put up their hands, and were then relieved of their guns and axes and marched off the claim. The whole outcome was never learned. Days afterward wild stories were in circulation regarding the fight at Glazier Creek, and it was rumored that two men had been badly injured and one killed, but nothing was ever known for certain.

At daybreak most of us were sent home, leaving four men on guard. The claim was saved and another lawsuit avoided.

On the first day of October I was put back on day shift.

It was a welcome change. Day shift and daylight! It still rained and snowed at times, but it was easier to keep dry when one could see and did not have to stumble among the boulders, box braces, and the various structures. The season was getting late, and while my hands and arms still suffered from the ice-cold water, they were getting toughened to it, and I could sleep at night. In fact, so much did the day shift improve conditions that I began to contemplate staying in over the winter.

Now it was my turn to lie in my tent while outside the poor devils shoveled in the pit. I would lie there listening to the metallic sound of the gravel as it slid from the shovels into the boxes and to the rain drumming a tattoo on the roof of the tent, snug in my warm bed while the wind flapped the canvas. Few could appreciate such coziness unless they had endured the hardships which had come to me. It was like the times in Finmarken when with the wind whistling through the rigging the little crowded boat cabin would become a haven of rest and peace.

I woke up one morning late in October to find the tent unusually cold. I hated to get out and start the fire. I thought it odd that there was no sound of shoveling, but it was too cold to investigate, and after making the fire I jumped back under the covers to warm up until it was time to go out on the job. I was no sooner in bed than Ole, the night boss of the nearest gang, opened the tent flap and stuck his head in.

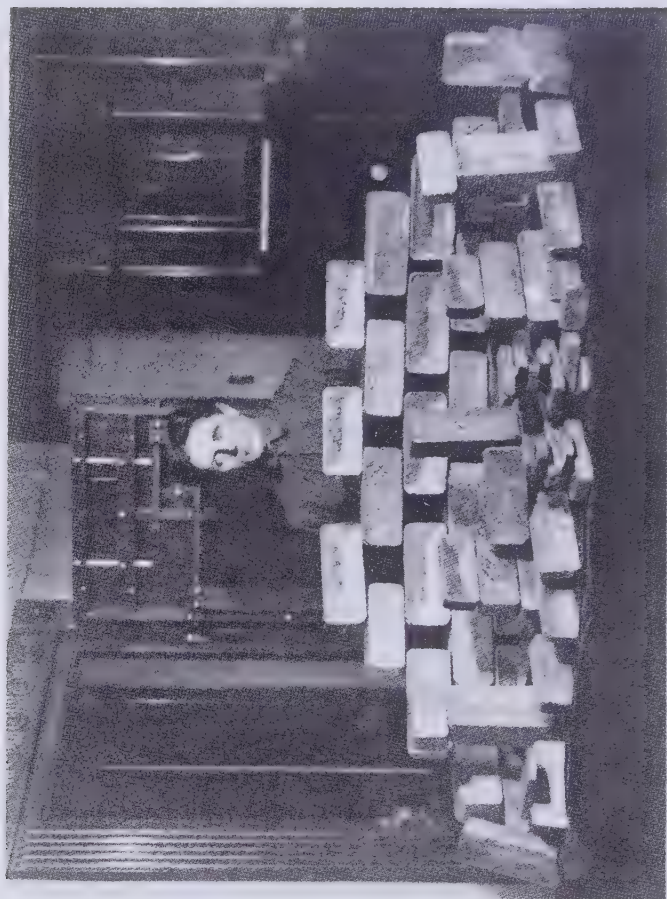
"Well, it's all off. She froze up on us last night. You clean up the boxes for the last time to-day."



This was news indeed. We finished up that day with sixteen thousand dollars in nuggets, making a glorious finish for the company. The next day we spent in stacking up the sluice boxes and tools and everything pertaining to the mining — shovels, picks, wheelbarrows, braces, blocking riffles, etc. I had already told Lindeberg of my intention of staying in Alaska that winter and had asked him for a job. He gave me no definite promise, as there were only a few men needed to watch the camps and, as always, dozens of applications.

The cold weather broke and it rained again. I had a temporary job in a small four-man camp. We did our own cooking, and I began learning the "sourdough's" culinary system. I worked with two young American boys of Norwegian extraction, who proved to be fine chaps. They were about twenty years old, just out of school and not used to hard work. But with no slave-driving boss we did the best we could. I learned English from them, but I had worked among Scandinavians so long that I had acquired their bad pronunciation. For years I had to fight to overcome their singsong jargon, so humorous to the Americans.

The final freeze found me on duty as watchman at Discovery Anvil, where I was to get seventy-five dollars a month, with nothing to do but eat and sleep and ski. My partner on this job was a large and corpulent Swedish butcher from Michigan whose name was Malm. From his lurid tales, I imagined he was a wonderful hunter, and after the snow came he kept threatening to go rabbit hunting, mentioning it every day for at least three weeks. Then one day he definitely made up his mind that the hunt was



SEPPALA WITH A MILLION DOLLARS IN GOLD

on, and he asked me to accompany him. It was more of an order than an invitation, but he was fifteen years older than I and so the recognized boss.

When I joined him with my gun, ready to start, he called out, "You need n't take any gun — I'll do all the shooting." I could not understand why I was going along if this was to be the case. However, I went. The snow was as yet not very deep, so we sallied forth on foot, crossing the hills close to camp and then following down the Snake River flats. After two hours we came to the hill west of Snake River, where we ran across some rabbit tracks. The Swede then ordered me to follow the tracks and chase the rabbit back to him — whereupon he sat down and lit his pipe. He was out of breath, apparently "all in" from the walk — and it was hardly to be wondered at, with two hundred and twenty-five pounds of flesh to burden him.

It was not long before I saw three rabbits, just ahead of me on the hillside. For an hour I climbed about the hills and gullies, heading the rabbits toward Malm. I covered miles, but kept to the tracks, and at last came nearer the hunter. Malm told me later that the rabbits ran close by and that he fired at them but missed.

About this time the easterly sky grew darker and seemed to be closing down on us. Soon it commenced to snow. It fell like a thick blanket. Though I was now close to Malm, I could not see him, but fortunately could hear him shout. When we met, the blizzard was in full force, and we started home hurriedly, taking our direction from the wind, which was square in our faces. The blizzard was

roaring so we could hardly hear each other speak. The snow grew deeper. We struggled on in silence for over an hour; then I heard Malm's voice through the storm: "We are lost. It's your fault. I let you walk ahead, and you have lost the direction. Now let me go first and you follow."

True enough, I had gone ahead of him, but not for any purpose except to break trail for my slower companion. Now Malm took the lead, but he soon began veering off more and more, until we had the wind at our backs. I called his attention as discreetly as possible to the fact that we should be facing the wind. He merely grunted that the wind had changed and that he knew he was right — we had crossed the Snake River an hour previously, and now we were back at the river again.

After some persuasion, when Malm's fatigue had overcome his stubbornness, he again allowed me to take the lead. It was heavy and difficult going as we stumbled between the niggerheads. The surface was level with snow, but as we walked one step would top a niggerhead and the next sink two feet down.

Malm soon began to lag behind. The wind was bitterly cold and penetrated our clothing, freezing it as stiff as a board. Malm kept shouting at intervals that I was crazy, and begged me to go to the left. Frequently we had to stop and rest, though it was folly to stop long. I tried to reason with the Swede, who was plainly determined to veer off to the left, making a left circle and getting the wind again at our backs.

Finally I decided that whatever happened I was going

my own way. "Malm," I said, "I am going my own direction and face the wind. If you are so sure I am wrong, you go your way." Malm wanted to argue, but I started off, and he followed. For two hours we battled against the storm, covering our faces as best we could, forging on with bent heads and every now and then turning and walking backwards to give the front of our bodies relief from the cutting wind. On and on we went. Now and then Malm shouted something. Finally he threatened to leave me, but I regulated my pace so that he did not get too far behind and yet did not get near enough to me to argue about directions.

We were traveling over an everlasting flat, and should have reached the Anvil hills long ago. It was useless to try to open our eyes long enough to make out anything ahead. Dusk came, and we were moving slower and slower. Still the flats. Malm shouted once again, and I turned around to find him sitting in a huddled mass in the snow, cursing and saying that he had been led to his death. He declared he could go no further and that he might just as well stay where he was and die as prolong the agony. I stood looking at him, while the wind penetrated to the very marrow of my bones. Almost I began to doubt my own directions. Could he be right—had the wind changed? If so, we were headed for the endless tundra.

Malm began raving about his home and family. Why had he come here to die? I thought a little false encouragement might rouse him. "I see a light in the distance—we shall soon be there; that must be Anvil Hill," I said;



and once more Malm rose and shambled along against the wind. But of course there was no light, and no hill, and Malm soon had his doubts.

"You're a crazy fool. To think that I could have let you lead me into this!"

I told him that I could now plainly see the hill. "Can't you feel that the ground is rising?" I shouted — and Malm believed me and struggled on. It was quite dark as we struck a bunch of willows that served to break the wind for a moment. Malm fell in a heap in the brush and did not move. I had long since been carrying the gun, and now decided to play my last card. I rolled him over and thrust the muzzle of the gun under his heart. "God forgive me for murder, but I will not see a friend freeze to death. I'll end it for you quickly."

He turned his head from side to side. "My God, boy, don't shoot me!"

"Get up and walk, then, or I shall kill you."

The bluff worked, and he staggered through the willows and out beyond. Then, as though by a miracle, the ground began to rise. I shouted encouragement.

"I know where we are now. It will be downhill soon, and is only a few miles more!"

This discovery gave us new hope. When at last we reached the valley the wind had died down. In the darkness we stumbled over a stake. I lit a match. It was marked "No. 9, Anvil." A half-mile more and we were home. Malm dropped exhausted inside the door, and I set about building a fire. That night not another word passed between us. I dragged Malm to his bunk, rolled

him in his blankets, and then crawled into my own bunk, grateful for deliverance from my first Arctic blizzard.

Malm never forgave me. He told anyone who would listen that we should have been home long before if I had not been so stubborn. He had known all the time that he was right. He even told the superintendent that I had lost my head entirely and should undoubtedly have frozen to death if it had not been for him.

We never went hunting together again. Malm would sometimes take his gun and wander out, but he never ran any more risk of losing sight of the cabin.

## V

### STAKING A CLAIM

IN December Lindeberg brought the news that a strike had been made up in the Kougarok. He was going to send out two dog teams and four men, and he offered me a chance to go. Of course I accepted eagerly, figuring that I was on the way to stake a rich claim. Everything was to be kept quiet and it was important to get off in a hurry. So that night I packed my clothes and went to town to purchase a parka and shoepacks. The team was assembled in the company's barn, and at four o'clock the following morning we were off. Both teams were heavily loaded with dog salmon, rice, bacon, coffee, canned milk, beans, flour and baking powder, and everything that went to make up a grubstake.

We started early in order to get away unnoticed. The first day we traveled about sixteen miles, camping at a little roadhouse on Nome River. It was a one-room lumber shack covered with a tin roof made from coal-oil cans, and was naturally called the "Tin House." There we overtook one team of "stampederers." Late that night we heard more teams passing on the river below the house. The next day we traveled fifteen miles, stopping at a dug-out in the side of the river bank. The inside and the front were of stone, and it was covered with a sod roof. This

tiny one-room cabin held bunks for thirteen men. The snow had covered it, and during the night the drifts around the doorway shut out every possible air hole. It was a terrible night, and we nearly suffocated. When the door was opened so much snow came in through the crack that we were compelled to close it and go back to our suffocation.

Christmas Eve we camped on Pilgrim River. We often passed through flocks of thousands of ptarmigan. When the birds rose into the air at once it was like the combined noise of thunder and an earthquake. For dinner Christmas Eve we had ptarmigan "Mulligan stew." It was such a change from the regular grubstake that we all ate as if we had not tasted food for days. A Swede named Andrew was the cook, and a good one; that night he made a rice pudding with which to top off the meal. After the dogs were fed and chained to the willows in the lee of the wind, John, the leader of the expedition, brought forth a bottle of whiskey. We sat in our sleeping bags, drinking the Christmas toddy in true Scandinavian fashion, and stories were told until the whiskey was gone, and long after. There in the little tent, with the willows making a warm fire in the Yukon stove, it was as cozy a Christmas Eve as I ever spent. My three Swedish partners proved to be good fellows and congenial companions.

Every night camp was made according to the same routine. We each had our allotted job. Mine happened to be that of chopping holes through the ice to find water. Often it meant cutting through three or four feet of ice. John and Andrew would clear a space on the snow where

the tent was to be put up. John would unharness and chain up the dogs; then the dog pot was put on the stove and the food cooked. The pot was filled with water, then the dog salmon was chopped into small pieces and dropped in, and when it was boiling rolled oats, rice, or cornmeal was added and the mush thickened. Sometimes bacon was also cut up and put in with the fish. After the dog feed was done Andrew would prepare the supper. When the tent had been securely fastened down one of the boys went to get willows. First dry willows were used; then after the fire was started the green ones could be thrown on.

At the mouth of the Kougarok we ran into a heavy blizzard and lost the trail. But it was not long before someone saw signs of tobacco juice on the new snow, and, following it, we went on until we reached an Eskimo settlement of several huts. We asked permission to camp with a family overnight. When we crawled in we found the inhabitants all sick and coughing terribly. When we asked what the trouble was, an old man — probably the grandfather of the family — merely rubbed his stomach and answered, "White man's cow-cow," meaning the white man's food. At that time the Eskimos were dying like flies. The white man had just come to the country and had brought with him his civilization and his food, and the combination was proving too much for the Eskimos.

On one occasion we stopped at an igloo before which three dogs were lying, thin and starved. We entered, and there sitting on a pile of skins and some willow branches



was an Eskimo with his back against the wall and a rifle in his hands, the muzzle pointing toward the torn skin flap of the door. I was the first to look in, and I jumped backwards as soon as I detected the gun. John called in that we were friendly and would give him cow-cow, but there was no answer. So Fred, the fourth member of our party, climbed on top of the sod igloo and peeked through a hole in the seal-gut window. The Eskimo was still sitting in the same position. Fred watched him for a few minutes and then spoke, but there was no answer. Fred called out, "I believe the Siwash is either dead or asleep." We decided to go in again — and, sure enough, we found that the Eskimo was frozen as solid as a stone. We figured the explanation to be that he was sick and hungry. Afraid that his starved dogs would attack him, he had placed himself in such a position that if they came he would be able to shoot them, weak as he was. There were traces of blood at the door, some hair, and the claws of a dog. One barrel of his gun was empty. He had probably shot one dog, and the others had dragged it out and devoured it. So we fed the surviving dogs and took them in tow.

That night we ran across two other teams and another deserted igloo in which there was a dead Eskimo. We wanted to occupy the igloo, so we moved the dead man to a place on the roof out of reach of stray animals, put up our stove, and made the usual preparations for the night. Soon other teams began to arrive. Our outfit had caught up with the advance party, who were supposed to know where the strike had been made; all eyes were on that team, and a scout was posted to report when they started. Each

outfit wanted to get their stakes in first; there was a good deal of mutual suspicion, and each was resolved to follow the leader.

When the news had reached Nome dozens of teams had set out. Anso was the man who had brought the tidings and the pannings to Nome, and he had got together a big grubstake and a dog team, backed by a saloon keeper, who had come along with him to stake the claim. Anso did not move that night or the next, so our outfit stayed on. New teams kept arriving, and they all stopped when they found how things stood.

Meantime, the Eskimo had disappeared! We heard the dogs fighting outside the igloo, but thinking it was some new arrival we did not pay much attention. Some of the Malemites, however, had broken loose, crawled to the roof of the igloo, and dragged the Eskimo down and made a meal of him. The next morning only his head and a few bones were to be found.

Anso hitched up and started off in the afternoon, and immediately all the other teams followed, close on his trail; but all Anso did was to drive around in a big circle and return, putting up his team in another place. About three in the morning, Fred, whose turn it was to watch, reported that Anso was leaving again. John harnessed up and took two men with him. I was taken because I could ski, and Andrew was left at the camp with the outfit. We took a small tent, stove, and some food, and were off. But Anso was wise — he started two teams in opposite directions, and in the dark no one could tell which was the right one to follow. So our outfit made a quick agree-

ment with another belonging to Pete Boris: they were to trail one party and we the other.

I went with Pete, so that there might be two to each team. He and I followed close behind one of the Anso teams, though it was so dark we could hardly see where we were going. Fortunately we happened to be trailing the right man, who had succeeded in misleading most of the others. Being among the first to reach the chosen place, Berret Creek, we staked a few claims, and then the whole outfit moved up to Spooner, where the recorder lived. The claims were recorded and a hand sled loaded with provisions. We had now changed around again and I was with Andrew. John threw all the dogs into one team and set out northward to stake claims in the Good Hope district on Kotzebue Sound. Andrew and I remained to prospect on Berret Creek.

After John left, Andrew and I went on our way. It was bitterly cold every day, with the thermometer ranging between thirty and forty degrees below. We had to pull our heavy sled sixteen miles, most of it across country where the snow was soft and unbroken. I was full of enthusiasm, working so hard in the morning that by afternoon I was tired. A blizzard overtook us when we had about six miles more to go, and we lost our direction. Making a shelter of canvas, we tried to get into our robes, but the storm blew down the shelter and our sleeping bags became full of snow. Andrew, who had been in Rampart for two years and who had had infinitely more experience than I, suggested going back to Spooner, leaving our load where it was and returning when the storm subsided; so we started

back, pulling the empty sled, with only one robe between us.

The snow was getting deeper all the time and the walking more difficult. All we had eaten was a little hard-tack and cold fried bacon at our shelter. The going was so hard that it began to tell. I was the more exhausted of the two, and at last was all in and wanted to stop and rest. I began to have more sympathy for Malm's predicament in the rabbit-hunting episode. Andrew kept me on my feet by telling me that rest would only make it all the harder to get going again. Every time I slackened my pace Andrew pulled the sled up on my heels with a jerk that set me off again, and when he thought that I was at the end of my rope he drew his hand out of his mitten and hit me a stinging blow in the face. I would not have believed that I could revive so rapidly. I flew into a rage and tore ahead after Andrew, but he kept running on, leaving me to pull the whole sled alone. My rage at the blow on the cheek, coupled with his leaving me to manage the load, kept me going, hardly knowing at times that I was on my feet. Motion became purely mechanical and my brain seemed to be completely dead: only the will to catch Andrew and settle the score preserved a spark of animation in me.

At ten o'clock that night we reached the Spooner igloo. The recorder set out a meal, but I sat down on the bunk, drew off my shoepacks, and toppled over — and that was the last of me until the next day. I had even forgotten to fight it out with Andrew, whom I afterwards thanked heartily for his brutality.

At daylight we found our cache, and reached the claim

in the evening. John had left the small tent there and the stove, so we set up light housekeeping and made ourselves as comfortable as possible. The question of fuel for the stove was a hard one; there were no willows of any kind in the neighborhood — it was just bare tundra. I started off to the head of the creek with the sled, looking for firewood, while Andrew was busy building a four-foot wall of snow blocks to keep the tent from blowing down, banking it up around the bottom to keep out the draught. Two miles up the creek on the hillside I found the tops of willows sticking out of the snow, and by digging down and cutting close I managed to get three loads.

Andrew began digging a hole for prospecting. Three feet down in the tundra he struck hard frozen clay gravel. He could do no more with the pick; it was necessary to thaw the ground with willow fires in order to sink the hole deeper. The temperature was very low and the frozen tundra cracked from time to time with thundering reports. All day these rumblings continued, and at night we would be awakened again and again. We took turns getting up first in the morning to start the routine of the day. In the evening we piled the kindling by the front of the stove. It was almost possible to light the fire from the beds, yet the cold was such that often our fingers were nearly frozen before the shavings were lighted. One night it blew so hard that we sat up, fully dressed, and held on to the ridgepole to keep the tent from being blown down.

For three weeks we kept thawing the same hole, until we had burned down eighteen feet to bed rock; but we found nothing. So we set to work on another hole.



One afternoon John and Fred drove into camp. They had staked a lot of claims up north somewhere for themselves, and for Andrew and me as well, but not one of us ever saw his prospective gold mine.

John and his dogs stayed overnight in the tent with Andrew and me. There was no necessity for chaining the fagged huskies, as they were too thin and worn out to move. In the morning they were found all piled up one on top of the other, trying to keep warm. Dogs and men needed fat food to keep going in that weather, and those who had never relished pork of any kind ate by the plateful slices of bacon cut a half-inch thick. After breakfast on that particular morning John and Fred started for Nome, leaving Jack and Nigger, the two big mongrel dogs. The dogs would not move; they had to be lifted one by one and put into their places in the team. Poor dogs, how stiff and sore-footed they were! And they had a drive of one hundred and thirty miles to make. Jack and Nigger were nothing but skeletons, but a few days' rest and good food soon restored them, and they turned out to be splendid animals. They weighed one hundred and ten and one hundred and twenty pounds, respectively, and pulled loads that would have staggered ordinary dogs. From that time the hauling of the willows became easy. None of the other claim stakers appeared with the intention of prospecting, though the country was staked for miles. As the second hole that Andrew and I had sunk had proved to be no more successful than the first, we too decided to hit the trail for Nome. The temperature at Spooner was ranging between sixty and seventy degrees below zero.

All during the trip I had been carrying skis, while Andrew kept snowshoes for an emergency. Andrew did not understand the use of skis, and he begged me to leave them at Spooner, as he felt sure that he would find good trails and that they would not be needed. We had no wish to burden the dogs with any superfluous load, and, though it was against my better judgment, I left the skis to avoid any hard feeling.

We set out from Spooner about six o'clock one morning near the first of February. The going was satisfactory until we reached Pilgrim River, where heavy trails and deep snow began. I could see that I had made a grave mistake in leaving my skis, as Andrew appropriated the snowshoes and I was left to wallow along as best I could. We kept going all day until it began to blow a gale from the south and the cold moderated. It grew so mild that our clothes were wet from the slush, and with no warning we suddenly broke through an overflow of thin ice and went knee-deep in the water. We tried to reach the bank, but the snow was so deep on both shores of the river that the dogs found no purchase and could not drag the sled to the land. In the end we decided to leave the load, tent, robes, and stove, as most of the equipment was so wet by this time that it was thoroughly useless weight.

Making a cache of the whole outfit on a high bar, we went on. For half a mile or so we could walk securely on good ice. Then we would break through, floundering in the icy water as the crust gave way. We had fourteen miles to go, with the storm constantly growing worse. After dark further travel was out of the question. We

dug a hole in the snow on the river bank and crawled into it, dogs and all. We fed the dogs some salmon, ate bacon and bread ourselves, and then curled up all together, trying to keep warm. Wet through, and with only one blanket, Andrew and I wrapped ourselves up as best we could. It had grown bitterly cold again. It soon became apparent that there was to be no sleep for both of us at a time — one had to stay awake. We would nudge each other in the back as it got too cold underneath the blanket, and shift our positions, putting the other side of our bodies against the snow and allowing the coldest side to warm up. It was an endless process of continual moving.

It was impossible to tell how long we had been there when the dogs became restless and crawled out, walking the snow blanket which covered us and which had already grown heavier as the snow increased during the night. The blanket then settled down with such weight that it threatened to squeeze the breath from our bodies. I told Andrew that I was suffocating and had to get out for some air. Andrew begged me to stay under the blanket and preserve what little warmth there was, but I kicked my way out, feet first. The wind had shifted to the north and a furious blizzard was raging. Such cold I had never experienced. My clothing froze immediately where I stood. I was wearing a very large blue drill parka, and as the wind got under it, blowing it out all around my body, it stiffened and I looked as though I were sticking my head through a giant umbrella. I tried to crawl into the hole again, but my frozen clothing made it out of the question. Everything I had on was freezing so solid that the only way I

could keep my body from freezing with it was to keep moving every instant, walking and running as much as possible in the lee of the wind.

I shouted to Andrew to come out and make a start. The moon was shining above the blizzard, which raked the ground with driving snow, and the only way to see anything was by looking up directly overhead. Andrew only called out and told me not to be a fool, but to come back in the hole, but my parka had grown so stiff that I could scarcely move my arms. I told Andrew to do as he liked, but said that I intended to start up the river. Andrew had a horror of being left alone, so he crawled out. We got the dogs together, and soon were on our way. The overflow was now still deeper, but it helped to thaw out the lower part of my trousers. Andrew had water-tight Eskimo mukluks tied tight above the knee, keeping his feet perfectly dry, but that was the only dry part of him. I had not as yet been initiated in the use of mukluks and had only Canadian shoepacks; my feet had been wet since they had struck the overflow the day before.

We could see only straight overhead, and, to the sides, a dark, vague outline of the steep Pilgrim River Canyon, below which we had camped. We went on to a fork in the river, but in the storm it was impossible to tell which branch we ought to take. If we took the wrong turn, we faced starvation, as it led nowhere. I made up my mind that, whichever branch we were to take, we must decide in a hurry, as I was freezing by degrees. We left it to chance. I started ahead and Andrew followed. A few miles up, Andrew shouted, "What is that?"

I looked where he was pointing and could see something black sticking up out of the snow. "It appears to be a stovepipe poking up out of a snowdrift."

It was about one o'clock and both of us were tired, but Andrew was nearly exhausted, so we drove over to investigate. We found that it was a stovepipe, and discovered also the ridgepole of a tent, but no sign of life. We decided to dig out the tent and camp. I shouted down the smokestack and a voice answered, "For God's sake, don't try to come in here. There are two of us here already, and we have been storm-bound for a week. We have n't enough food for two, so don't disturb the tent, or we shall all freeze and starve to death."

Andrew looked at me when I transmitted the message of greeting I had received. The snow was whirling around his face as he stood there shivering and cursing. He shook his fist at the tent. "You damnable selfish curs, I hope you starve and freeze to death where you are." He added that he would stake his last cent that those inside were claim jumpers fresh from some law school or boosters from some gambling hall or saloon. At all events, it was unlikely that any old-timers would turn away two brother sourdoughs. It was against the code.

"Well," I said, "it looks to me as though there was nothing else to do but mush along and try to make Sliskovitch. At least we don't have to worry that those fellows will ever get far enough from the stove to jump our claims in the Kougarok!"

My feet had been cold all day, but now my toes no longer had any feeling and did not bother me, although I did not



at the time understand the reason. My trousers were frozen like two stovepipes fastened together, with a flexible joint at the knees. Only there and at the hip joint was the stiffness broken. The frozen clothing cut into my flesh at every step. It was getting dark, and in the lull the snow stopped whirling around our heads and we were able to make our way in close to a high bluff on the river bank and out of the wind.

We plodded along. Neither of us spoke. The dogs were tired, traveling was slower, and there was no chance now to ride. Somehow we felt that we were on the right fork, yet we should have been at Sliskovitch long ago. We decided again to try to make camp, but our matches were wet and soggy. We went on a few hundred yards, stopping to talk over the situation in a clump of sheltering willows. I called Nigger, but he would not come; he kept right along up the river. I called again, but the dog still kept on, taking no notice. We had no choice but to follow him, and Andrew caught the handlebars just as the sled hit a piece of glare wind-swept ice. I was struggling along behind, as it was obvious that Andrew needed to ride; he was about done for.

Suddenly Andrew called, "I see a light." Outside of every roadhouse a lantern generally hung on a high pole so that it could be seen some distance away. At first I thought that Andrew was beginning to suffer from the visions that half-frozen maniacs see when they imagine they are close to home. But sure enough, it was the light of Sliskovitch Roadhouse. Nigger had known where he was, and there had been no holding him back.

The little roadhouse was cut in the side of a small round hill. It was a tent fourteen feet by sixteen, reënforced with sod and willows. There were several bunks three tiers high, and a good hot fire in the stove. Already one party had come in with two horses and another with a dog team, so that all told there were eight of us within the tent, and the horses and dogs outside. The men about the stove asked if either of us were frozen. We answered that neither of us was suffering from sunstroke, but that as far as we knew we were all right. But when they heard how long we had been on the trail they immediately began helping us remove our footwear. It turned out that my feet had frozen; the big toe on each foot was as hard as a potato. A tub full of ice-cold water was brought into play. Closer examination showed that the heel of one foot was in bad condition, and the men set to work on the frozen flesh. Of all the experiences I have ever endured, this was the worst. I sat for two hours with my feet in the icy water, clinching my fists and grinding my teeth. Fortunately one of the men in the roadhouse happened to be a doctor; he was a welcome addition to the party.

The following day the thermometer stood at twenty-five degrees below zero and it was blowing hard. The horses were covered with blankets and turned out on the little hill behind the house. The poor animals suffered terribly. Finally one had to be killed for food and another died from exposure. The roof of the igloo was even with the hill, and it was always horribly in our minds that some night one of the horses would blunder on to the roof and crash down on us. As we expected, one night one of the

boys who was sleeping on the floor jumped up with the announcement that the horses were breaking through the roof — and sure enough, there above us was a great hoof, and the ridgepole was bending and cracking. There was a scramble for the door, as none of us relished the possibility of being a cushion for a falling horse. We dislodged him and the next morning the unwelcome intruder was killed for food.

In a few days the storm subsided. Andrew hitched up the dogs and drove back to the cache where we had left our outfit on the river. The overflows were now all frozen and he made quick time. After two more stormy days at Sliskovitch, we set out for Nugget Roadhouse. My feet were still in a very painful condition, and the snowshoeing, when I took my turn at breaking trail, did not increase my comfort. Wherever the Nome River was wind-swept I could ride, but the intervals afoot were all but unendurable. When we reached Nome the doctor decided there was nothing to do but to amputate my toes. I was on the verge of consenting to the operation when one of my miner friends dissuaded me.

“Leave what God Nature gave you be. Don’t let that damn butcher cut ’em off.”

I decided to take the old sourdough’s advice and still keep my feet and toes intact, as “God Nature” gave them to me.

Not many miles from where we had been prospecting, a group of men were caught in the same blizzard. They were lost entirely and wandered for a day in a blinding storm, knowing that there was a shelter cabin not far off,

but unable to find it. They began to freeze, first their legs and hands, then gradually more and more of their bodies. Finally Carpenter, the leader of the party, could no longer walk. His companions buried him in the snow and staggered on, trying to find the little sheltering roadhouse and if possible bring help for their freezing partner. Soon one more succumbed to the terrible cold, so the remaining member of the party buried him also in a drift and went on alone. His own feet froze so badly that he could no longer walk, but he went on crawling on his hands and knees, eventually losing consciousness. He was so close to the roadhouse that a man who had come out to feed his dogs saw a dark object in the snow some distance away. He went over to investigate, and, discovering the unconscious man, brought him in, cared for him until he regained his strength, and thawed his feet. Then they started out with a dog team to find the others. They searched for hours, and finally found both and brought them back and cared for them, going through the same thawing process. As soon as it was possible to move them they were brought to Nome for treatment. One lost his fingers, toes, and part of his nose, while the other lost both feet and arms. He lingered, suffering horribly for days, and finally died after his mind, too, had given way.

Countless tragedies of the same kind occurred. People from all walks of life, not accustomed to the cold, and unprepared by any idea of how to dress and prepare for the Arctic blizzards, ventured in hopeful ignorance into the gold lands. But the best and most experienced, as well as the tenderfoot, were numbered among the missing. Even



SEPPALA AND THE AUTHOR



the Laps, born to life in the Arctic, complained of the cold, and one of them lost his life in the Kougarok stampede.

In the spring of that year I was walking from Nome to Anvil. On the tundra near a claim stake, partly buried in a thawing snowdrift, I found a man who had disappeared in the blizzard and had frozen to death just two and a half miles from Nome. He had apparently found gold, as in his pocket he had fourteen ounces of gold dust, which he was probably trying to carry back to town.

While I was recovering I made friends with many American and English people in Nome, and the wife of the proprietor of the Golden Gate Hotel spent her spare time in teaching me English. I learned conscientiously, and acquired a foundation in the language, for which I have always been grateful.

Tex Rickard's saloon, the Northern, was the most popular place in town among the miners. Everybody liked Tex and he was known to be on the square. The gambling conducted in the Northern was aboveboard; Tex did not tolerate short sports or crookedness.

As I began to feel like myself once more, I fell into the habit of wrestling with a big Swede, my roommate at the time. It was a means of keeping in condition during my convalescence. The Swede was a good sport. Once before, on the Ohio, we had locked horns and I had unintentionally injured him rather seriously. He used to come to my cabin on the boat and delighted in displaying his strength. One day he began joking about my small size. I found myself grabbed round the neck with both hands. The crockery washstand had been broken in a previous

friendly brawl, and now the sharp edges were exposed. He had made some remark to the effect that he would throw me out of my own cabin. As the Swede tried to lift me off my feet and put me out of the room, I forced him against the washstand, forgetting that his hands would be jammed against it. By bracing one foot against the bed, I was able to exert a great deal of force. The Swede screamed, as well he might, and immediately let go. I suddenly realized what I had done, and felt mortally ashamed. He was a good enough sport to realize that I had been possessed by only one thought, and that was to keep from being swung from my feet; I had been entirely unconscious of the fact that his hands were in a position to be cut by the broken stand. His arm had been jammed against the sharp edges, which had made a deep gash across the tendons. The wound kept him from doing any work with his hands for several months, so that he had been given a job as winter superintendent for the prospecting company that employed me. In that way we had become roommates, and, as both of us were in a state of recuperation, we enjoyed many friendly matches.

One night the Swede lent me a team belonging to the company so that I could take Molinka for a drive. Molinka at that time was the object of my desires, and I intended to ask her to share my fate and fortune. But she anticipated what was coming, and luckily was endowed with plenty of common sense. We drove to Fort Davis over a glorious moonlit trail, with jingle bells on the harnesses and a warm wolfskin robe tucked about us. The setting was irreproachable, but as I neared the point of

proposing she calmly said: "Leonhard, you are a fine boy, but your money is no good." This quenched my romantic ideas for years to come. Molinka's cool reception of my proffered affections gave me matter to think about, until years afterward a more tender-hearted lady did me the honor to accept my proposal.

The following July I was given the job of gold collecting, which meant that after every clean-up I collected the gold and took charge of it temporarily. I had become the proud owner of Jack and Nigger, the two faithful dogs of the Kougarok days, and the first dogs I ever owned in Alaska. As long as they were with me I had no fear that anyone would attempt a robbery, though we lived alone like three old hermits far out at the end of Dexter Creek. During the summer Nigger died, and Jack and I felt the loss equally. Nigger and Jack were brothers and inseparable. When Nigger was gone Jack appointed himself my guardian, and seemed to know that he was to help watch the gold. Jack slept directly in front of my bed, and I knew that nothing but a bullet would stop him if anyone interfered with us. So Jack and I carried on in the little tent, and there was no cause for worry. It was sometimes lonely, but we were happy and enjoyed our solitude.

An old Englishman had obtained a lease on the upper end of the claim, and his young foreman would sometimes wander out and pass the evening with me. The first time he called, Jack was lying outside of the tent, and as he came near the dog flew at him. The young foreman fell flat on his back, but Jack made no attempt to bite him — he simply objected to his coming to the door. I heard a voice and

went out, to find the boy getting to his feet, keeping a watchful eye on Jack. The scrutiny was mutual. I spoke to Jack, and they came in together. After that Jack remembered him and they were great friends.

One day Ben, the foreman, came out to spend the evening, and brought his gun to clean, as I had told him that I had some gun oil. While he was working away, I was writing a letter. I had seen him take out the bullets, and gave the matter no more thought, but sat at a table with my back turned, while he was close to the stove, working by the light of the fire. Suddenly the gun exploded. I was sitting on an empty fruit box, and thought I felt a slight jolt below me as the shot rang out. Ben jumped to his feet, white with fright. "My God, are you dead?"

I moved a little to be sure that I was n't, and replied that I still seemed to be breathing. Ben had put a cartridge in the gun for some reason, and had then accidentally touched the trigger and fired the gun. The bullet had grazed the bone in his knee and had then passed through the box on which I had been sitting, just an inch below me, after which, continuing on its way, it had broken a bottle of whiskey standing under a table. Jack was outside, and he began growling and barking and leaping against the door. I let him in, and he immediately placed himself between Ben and me, never taking his eyes from our visitor, and watching every move he made. The next time Ben came to call Jack refused to let him get near the door until I called him and assured him that Ben was not a murderer.

Not long after, I wandered into Nome one evening and

dropped in at the Sourdough Roadhouse along the way. The miners often went there to drink and gamble, while the dance-hall girls from Nome came out and danced away the dollars from the boys. In search of excitement, Jack and I sometimes went on a tour, stopping to watch the sights. I had no money to spend, but it was amusing enough to look on at the others and see the life.

The first time we visited the roadhouse Jack made himself greatly respected. I knew a number of boys who were frequent visitors at the Sourdough, and often they would invite me to take a drink with them. On this particular occasion there was a big Irishman who was in an exceptionally jovial humor. Jack and I were on the way out when he rushed up with the generous intention of proffering me a drink before I left. He grabbed me by the shoulder and whirled me around with a quick jerk which Jack mistook for an attack. The dog immediately retaliated, catching the Irishman by the back of his woolen sweater and throwing him to the floor. He came down with a crash, hitting and breaking a chair as he fell. After that no one took liberties with my person while Jack was in sight. But "Big Mike" and I had our drink, and on the strength of Jack's performance and in his honor he set them up for the house. Mike was one of the best. Jack began to grow fat from high living, and must have attained a weight of one hundred and thirty pounds through the miners' generosity.

In those days sluice boxes were robbed and gold stolen on all sides, but Jack and I lived on in our little tent alone,



and no one attempted to molest us or interfere with the gold in our charge.

One foggy morning I walked down the creeks to see a young miner named Nick, who was living in a small tent on one of the claims, and with whom I often stopped to pass the time of day. On this occasion he had been sick for a week or more. As I came near the tent I noticed that the flap was open. Thinking Nick might be asleep, I peeked in before calling to him. The form of a man lay stretched out under the covers in his bunk, but the dirty blankets were pulled up over his face. I stood there horrified. Only two days ago he had been feeling much better, and now he lay there dead. I felt the resentment that often stole over me in the North when the gold had claimed another victim. I thought of the times Nick had showed me pictures of his family in Wisconsin, of the plans he had confided to me of making them all rich, and of the things he had hoped to do for his pretty little sister. I supposed it would fall to me to write them the sad news, and I was already composing the letter in my mind. I knew that he had some money in his claim, and decided that the sharks should not get their fingers on it.

I walked into the tent and stood over his bunk, looking down at the recumbent figure.

"Poor devil," I said aloud, and turned to go out. As I did so a muffled voice called from under the blankets, "Wait a minute, old-timer."

I was terrified. I had heard of men who believed in supernatural occurrences in those days of frenzy, and I decided that I was falling prey to their hallucinations. My

first impulse was to beat a speedy retreat from the tent. I turned for one more look at the bunk, only to see the corpse rising up in his bed. He spoke again:—

“You scared me to death. Why in hell did n’t you speak to me?”

I still wanted to run, but I could n’t. Nick began to laugh. “You need n’t look so disappointed. I am not dead yet.”

I saw at last that he was really alive, and my senses seemed to function again. Nick went on talking. “Did you see the bear?” I thought to myself that the man was crazy with fever and completely out of his head. I tried to calm him by telling him to lie down and take it easy.

“I’ll pour you some whiskey and build a fire in the stove. You just forget the bear; I’ll take care of him,” I said reassuringly.

“Whiskey! Hell! Have you got a rifle? A Colt is no good.” Nick was sitting on the edge of his bed and shaking like a leaf.

“You just get back in bed. When I am through with my clean-up I’ll go to town and get Dr. Southworth.” And I went on building the fire.

“Doctor be damned. I don’t want a doctor. All I want is a rifle.”

At this moment Jack, who had been outside, nosed his way into the tent, growling.

“You see, he smells him,” Nick said.

By this time I was growing a little impatient. I went over to Nick and forced him down under the covers.

“Nick, it’s the fever that is bothering you. See, you are

trembling all over. Now stay in that bunk, as I told you."

I was beginning to believe I should have to use strenuous methods and tie him down. Jack stood facing the door and was growling, his fur bristled up as it used to be when he was fighting the big Malemutes in John's team. I called to him, "What's the trouble, old boy?" The growling was only making Nick's delusion the more realistic.

Nick rose up in his bunk. "If you'll let me talk, I can tell you what's the matter with him, quick enough."

"Well, what is it?"

"You see, I was lying here on the willows under my blanket, sort of dozing off, when I heard something moving around among the tin cans and stuff outside. I knew that it was clean-up day and thought that it was probably you prowling around. Then I heard some heavy breathing, and as I looked at the tent opening, expecting to see you, there was a big black nose sticking through the door. I lay here scared stiff as the head of what appeared to be an enormous polar bear thrust its way in, moving and twisting from one side to the other. I'd never seen one before. My gun was empty and I had only a revolver. I had heard that sometimes a bear will not attack a person lying still — and that sure was easy for me, as I was about stiff from fright anyway. The bear could only get his head and neck in between the ties of the tent flap, so he stopped there and for some reason did not seem to want to break through. He just kept on moving his head from one side to the other, sizing up things. He looked at me for a few seconds, but

he never saw me move. Then suddenly he pulled his head out with a jerk as if he heard something behind him. He must have looked around for a while, as I still heard the rattle of cans and things. Then it was quiet. I stayed put, trying to pull myself together. Then when I heard more sounds and saw the tent flap move I pulled the covers up over my head, stretched out, and waited for what would happen next. I stayed as I was, not blinking an eyelash, until you spoke, all the time thinking you were the bear. I guess when he pulled his head out of the tent he must have had a scent of you and Jack and gone off."

I walked down to the claim and told the boys the story. They only laughed and said that Nick and I must have had a bad dream. After weighing the gold, we sat down to a dinner of corned beef, canned vegetables, and bread, with stewed prunes and apples for dessert. While we were eating a man from Buster Creek came in. We invited him to share our meal, and while he was eating he told us that on his way up he had met a polar bear. He said that he had crossed the Nome River just above Dexter, when he came face to face with a huge dirty white animal which, in the fog, he thought at first was a big reindeer. The bear seemed as surprised as he was, and instead of attacking him took off up the river and disappeared into the mist. A few days later a polar bear was shot only a few miles away, thereby reinstating Nick and me as sane members of the mining community.

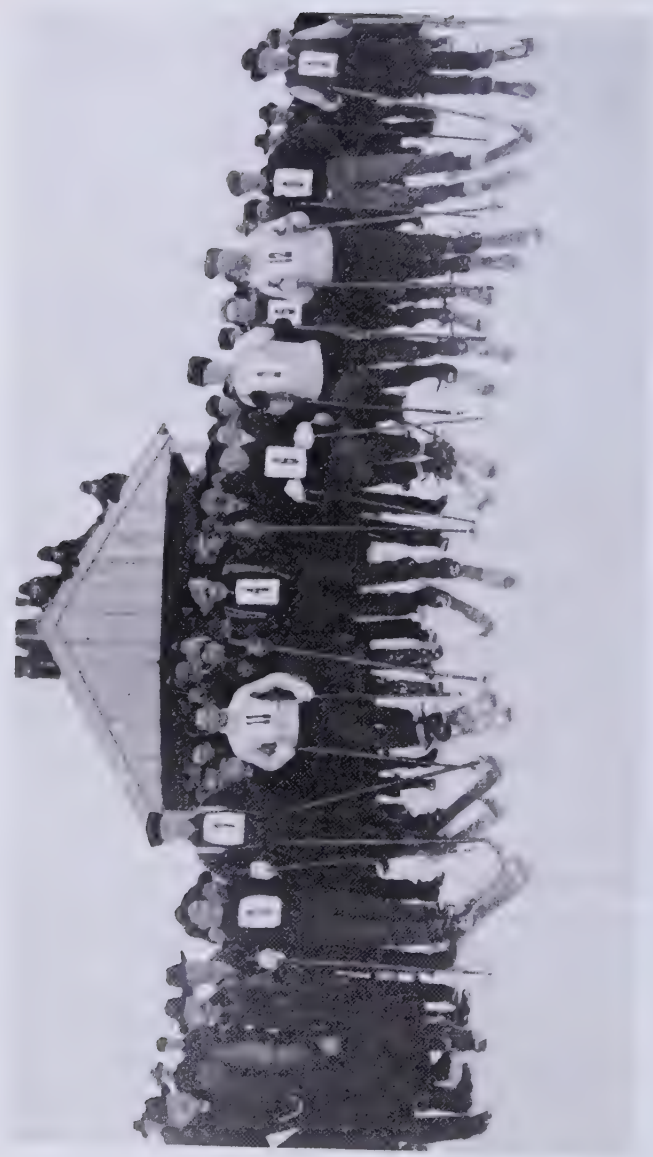
## VI

### WINTER SPORTS IN ALASKA

To my regret, I was allotted another job that December. It happened that my boss had a friend, a musician, who was now in Alaska, gold seeking. He planned to go back to his fiddling when he had made his fortune. He prevailed upon my boss to give him my job, so that he would not have to ruin his hands with a shovel. Hence I was put back on the night shift for the time being. I had been away from shoveling for so long that I had to go through the same hardening ordeal, and I was relieved enough when I was made night watchman on Discovery Anvil for the winter. During the daytime I did a lot of skiing. Skiing was becoming the one sport of the day, and there were races and jumping contests patterned on those in Norway. I had skied all my life, and had little trouble competing against the novices. In those days the skiing held the importance later usurped by the dog racing; it absorbed the interest of the public, increased the skill of the beginners, and eventually attracted experts from all over Alaska.

In the last ski-jumping contest a champion was entered as my chief competitor. He had just come from Norway and was fresh from the big competitions. There was a great deal of betting, and naturally he was considered a





SEPPALA (No. 11) WITH SOME OF HIS SKI-COMPETITORS

sure shot — in fact, he felt so confident of the outcome himself that as we went up the hill to the jump he said to me: "Now, Leonhard, I hope there will be no hard feelings on either side, no matter who wins. Let's shake hands on it before we start." I gladly shook hands with him, and assured him that there would certainly be no hard feelings on my part.

So the run started. We made three jumps apiece, and the judges were to award the prize on the length and form of the jump. At the conclusion I was declared the winner. The Norwegian champion was infuriated and demanded the opinion of outside judges, whereupon another contest was held, with two additional judges. Again I was declared the winner. My rival, who had previously been very friendly, did not speak to me for some time, and it was as well we had done the handshaking before the contest.

In the early days there was a scarcity of doctors. Though there were a few in Nome, it was difficult to get one in case of an emergency, owing to the slow speed of travel. A man who in the States would have been rushed to a hospital for treatment, in Alaska had to hitch up his own dog team or come in on his skis to the nearest habitation.

One day my brother Asle, who had come some time ago from Norway, visited the camp at Anvil, complaining that he had a sore throat. I looked at it, but except that it was slightly inflamed there seemed to be nothing wrong. He decided, however, to set out on his skis and see a doctor in Nome. The doctor found nothing wrong, so gave him some pills and sent him back. But Asle was not satisfied,

as the pills did not seem to be having the desired effect, so he then skied fifteen miles to Rock Creek and stayed there overnight. By this time he was not able to swallow. On the way to the doctor again he stopped with the watchman at No. 5, Anvil, whose name was Hans. He looked at Asle's throat, but he too said he could see nothing. With the aid of a spoon and looking-glass Asle examined his throat himself, and declared he could see something there. Hans looked again, and to be sure he now thought he too could see something in the throat. They made a set of hickory pincers out of a pick handle. The first pair was unsuccessful, so they made pair after pair until they had one with which they could work. They kept struggling until Asle's throat was so sore he could hardly stand another attempt, but Hans made one more try, and this time he succeeded in pulling out a fine steel spring of the type used for cleaning bed rock.

On thinking the matter over, Asle remembered having eaten some prunes and at the time thinking that something scratched his throat. The tiny steel spring had somehow found its way into the prunes, and had it not been for the persistence of the two sourdoughs it would doubtless have killed Asle eventually.

In the fall of this year four other boys and I leased Triple Creek. Pete and I owned the claim where we had built, but we worked on the next claim, where we knew there was a pay streak. One morning as I went out to fetch in some snow for water I saw a cabin about a hundred feet from ours where yesterday there had been nothing but a quarter of a mile of open land. The new cabin was on

our claim. I returned to our cabin and told the boys that we had been jumped, and they all piled out to see for themselves. It was almost unbelievable that we had not heard the newcomers. It was in November and still dark, so we waited until eight o'clock before making our protest.

The five of us went over and knocked at the door. It was opened by a large, heavy man, who demanded to know what we wanted. Pete made himself the spokesman. "We want you to move off our claim," he announced calmly. The man replied that this was his claim and that instead he would have to ask us to move — and to give force to his argument he pointed a shotgun through the door.

We returned to our own cabin to hold a council of war. It was decided that one of the boys should go into town and get the team. The next day it arrived, and we drove it up close to the cabin of our neighbor, whose name was Strong. We proceeded to hook the team to the doorway just as Strong opened the door. He again produced his shotgun, pointed it at the man who was handling the hooks and chains, and roared, "I'll fill the first man full of lead who tries to hook that chain on this cabin."

Strong was at least six foot three, and weighed over two hundred and fifty pounds. It was plain to be seen that he meant business, so we tied up the horses and retired to our cabin to talk it over. This time we decided to try diplomacy. Two of us were elected to go in and try to settle the matter peaceably, while the three others were to hold themselves in readiness behind the cabin, in case the argument called for force. According to our plan George and I were

to go in and talk things over with Strong, while watching for a chance to take the gun and disarm him. We had discovered that he had as his partner a tall, husky German with a rifle. I was to be the spokesman, and George, the big man of the party, was to do the fighting.

I went in, followed by George. I had a gun in my pocket, but no bullets in it. I told Strong that we wanted to talk things over and that if he really had a claim as he had said we would try to settle the matter amicably. Strong looked me over, and, seeing that I was a small man and apparently had no weapons, came to the conclusion that my intentions were good. I said that we had acquired our claim through another party and that perhaps there had been a flaw in the title. He told me to come in, but he kept hold of the gun. I sat down at the table at the back of the cabin, while George leaned carelessly against the doorway, watching every move Strong made. Strong was seated on the edge of the bunk, close to the door, and to speak to me he had to turn his head away from George. He was soon absorbed in his argument with me, and George, watching his chance, grabbed the gun from his hands while he was off his guard. Strong sprang up, but George had him covered. The German reached for his rifle, but I pointed my revolver at him and ordered him to sit down. The others heard me shouting "Sit down!" It was the signal, and they came storming in. George told Strong to get out of the cabin, and there was nothing else for him to do. The boys searched his pockets and found that he had no gun. Then they went over and disarmed the German. I told him to stay in the cabin: any hostile



move on his part would be rewarded with a well-aimed shot. He admitted that he had been hired by Strong and that there was no reason why he should show any fight. But we did not trust him.

We could not decide what to do about Strong, but Pete finally suggested the cat-o'-nine tails. Pete had some raw-hide lashing for the sled and with it he constructed a cat. Strong looked on and quaked: Pete said he would see to it that there were surely nine tails. When everything was ready Strong was stretched on his stomach and while two of the boys held him Pete administered a sound whipping. Strong begged us to call it quits, and readily promised to stay off our claim forever. We turned the two of them loose and headed them off, swinging the cat-o'-nine tails to keep them moving. John followed for a distance with the rifle, to make sure they had had enough. Then we hitched the horses to Strong's cabin and hauled it down into a deep hollow where it would have needed considerably more than four horses to drag it back.

The next day we were at work prospecting when a team drove up to our cabin and two men stepped down. As they approached the shafts we saw that they were United States marshals. One of them said brusquely: "You boys are under arrest. Get ready to come to town: you are to appear in court charged with intent to kill."

There was no way out. Much to our disgust, we had to get a lawyer to defend us. We hired an Irishman, and he turned out to be a whirlwind. I remember part of the cross-examination. Strong was on the stand. The lawyer asked: "How many men attacked you?"

Strong replied: "I could not count them — there were men coming from all directions."

"How many from the south?"

"Two."

"How many from the southwest?"

"One."

"How many from the west?"

Here Strong hesitated. The lawyer repeated, "How many from the west?"

Strong answered, "One."

"From the north?"

"None."

"But you said there were men coming from all directions."

Finally the testimony of Strong became so confused that the lawyer moved that the case be dismissed and that the miners be released to pursue their honest occupation; also that the court should warn Mr. Strong that unless he particularly cared for cat-o'-nine-tails he should in the future refrain from claim-jumping.

Not long after the affair with Strong we had a cave-in. I was working in a wide drift, and had started to pull out my loaded bucket, when I felt gravel falling from overhead. I realized it was a cave-in, and made a jump for safety, but was caught and buried. The boys in the next drift heard the crash and came over — to find me missing and the drift partly filled with gravel. They began digging frantically, and soon unearthed my head, and then removed the gravel as fast as possible from my body. I

was unconscious, and should have died in a few minutes if help had not arrived.

We returned to Nome at the end of the winter only five hundred dollars richer for our labors. It was a long way from a fortune. On our way back we visited the sand spit on the other side of Nome, where there was an Eskimo potlatch and dance going on. In an Eskimo dance the participants stand in a semicircle. Anywhere from four to ten may take part. Two or three women stand in front of the men, waving strings of dried seal entrails, while in the background the men work their arms and swing their bodies in time to the rhythm of the tom-toms, at the same time chanting, "Younga a-a-ya, younga a-a-ya," in the order of an Indian dance. They all work very hard in performing their strenuous gyrations.

There was in Nome at that time a man who knew something about sleight-of-hand tricks and whom I will refer to as Dave. In his younger days he had followed a circus. There was also an old sailor, called One-Eyed Scotty, because he had one good eye and one of glass. Scotty spent his time frequenting the saloons and was always ready to accept any invitation to the bar that came his way. He was never choosy with whom he drank, as long as the drinks were free. On this day Scotty and Dave both were present in the crowd of onlookers at the Eskimo dance, and during one of the intermissions Dave thought he would have a little fun. He started over to the centre of the tent, where there was a little table, carrying on as if there was something wrong with his ear. Both the Eskimos and the

whites wondered what was wrong. There were over a hundred Eskimos, and they crowded close to see what his difficulty might be. Dave finally reached up to his ear and drew out a twenty-penny nail. The Eskimos' eyes went wide with astonishment. Dave then pushed the nail in through his nose and reeled forward pretending to be dizzy. Jumping to and fro, he felt frantically about his head, until at last he slowly pulled out the nail from the back of his collar. The Eskimos began to get uneasy, and their exclamations of surprise, "Akka-akka!" could be heard on all sides. Then Dave went over to the table and began to cough, finally ejecting his upper and lower sets of false teeth. The Eskimos, who were now backing off as much as possible, pressed against the sides of the tent.

Then old Scotty decided to contribute his share to the entertainment: he calmly removed his glass eye and walked over and placed it on the table. That was more than the Eskimos could stand; they shouted that it was the Evil Spirit, and rushed for the door. When they could not get out fast enough, they slashed the sides of the tent to ribbons with their knives, falling over each other in their escape. They are naturally a superstitious people, and this was far more than they could comprehend. By the time the whites were collected enough to pacify them there was not an Eskimo to be seen.

Up to this time winter mining was carried on in the thawed ground along the beaches of the creeks. A rich strike was made on the flat frozen tundra about a mile from Discovery Anvil, at a place known as Little Creek. The pay was found on an ancient beach about fifty feet

down on bed rock, and everyone began staking claims on the tundra along the old beach line. Andrew and John, my companions in the Kougarok, leased a claim next to the one where the strike was made. They bought boiler points and hose for thawing and sank a shaft sixty feet to bed rock, but found nothing. They prospected in all directions, but still with no success. When at last they had spent all their money and were disgusted, one of them went to town and offered a saloon keeper his share in the lease for fifty dollars; but the saloon keeper was skeptical, as was everyone else to whom he applied. Eventually he returned to the claim and both the boys decided to pack up their equipment, pull out the points, and forget it. As a last fling they shoveled away a foot or so into the face and panned it. To their amazement they found a twenty-five-cent pan. They shoveled another foot further, and the pan amounted to three dollars. They then shoveled furiously, and before long they were taking out three hundred dollars at a haul. As they went on the findings grew richer and richer until the highest pan ever taken out in Alaska was found, totaling three thousand dollars. As a panful is the equivalent of one shovelful, it was not long before they were rich.

The next summer Andrew and John left the country with between ninety and a hundred thousand dollars spot cash. They went to Seattle and established themselves in the real-estate business, in which they proceeded to lose all they had made. Andrew went back to his old trade as a painter, and shortly afterward died of consumption and a broken heart. This fate was typical of that of many of the



boys who "struck it." They went out to the States, invested their money, and without knowing much about business fell in with the sharks, and so spent their last years broken financially and in spirit.

The first few years I was at Discovery Anvil I often helped the blacksmith at a trade I knew well. When Gus, the blacksmith, was rushed he would send for me, and in time we became close friends. One day we decided to go prospecting. With an outfit and our dogs we went up to the Kobuk River and camped in what we thought was a likely locality far inland. We built a good log cabin and prospected all winter, but found nothing of any value. Passing a whole winter with a man in a wilderness is trying enough, and queer things often developed. Gus, whom I had always thought rational in every respect, now began acting rather oddly at times. He would get up in the night, light the candle, and read the little Bible he had brought with him, and would then utter long and suppliant prayers. When finally I suggested that we go back to Nome for the summer he would not hear of it. He wanted to sluice on a creek where we had found a hopeful prospect. He said he would never return to civilization again.

He had grown so strange of late that I had to watch him carefully. It was obvious he was getting worse all the time. One night he got up, took his gun, and rushed out of the door. As he ran out he shouted: "There are Indians from the Koyukuk lurking around here." He fired several shots, and as I hurried into my parka I could hear him mulling around outside. I could not believe he had

gone out of his mind entirely, and concluded he was having a nightmare. But before I was dressed he came in again. He had been running around barefooted in the snow, and he was still insisting that something was wrong. He claimed he had seen an Indian and had shot at him, but when I went out to investigate there was no sign of any strange track. He talked and raved about Indians for a while, and then went back to bed, and I noticed that he took his rifle with him and did not turn out the light. "No," he said, "I'm not taking chances with any of you, and I don't intend to be murdered in the dark." I was sure now that there was something wrong with his head.

In the morning I got up to make the breakfast. I saw that Gus was lying with his head under the covers, but he was peeking out from under a corner of the blanket, watching everything that was going on. I was genuinely worried about him. Finally he got up, and after dressing he proceeded to make his own breakfast.

"What's the matter with my cooking?" I asked him.

He grabbed his rifle and, pointing it, said: "Dump out that mush. Do you think I did n't see you putting the poison in it?"

I knew now that I was dealing with a maniac, husky enough to tear me to pieces.

"But I've eaten some of the mush myself," I argued.

"You can't fool me this time. I've known all along that you have just been waiting for a chance to poison me so you can get the claim for yourself. I'm on to your game."

Then he sat down with his gun across his knees and prayed. I was terrified. Hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement, and alone with a wild lunatic so much bigger and more powerful than I that if it came to a fight my chances were pretty slim. Gus told me that he was going to watch me day and night, and that no one would ever know that he had killed me. I realized that I could only resort to strategy, so I sat down as calmly as I could.

"I tell you what I will do," I said. "I'll give you a deed to every claim we have, signing it over to you. Suppose we strike out for Candle and have the papers signed with witnesses."

"No chance in the world. There is only one paper that is any good to me, and that is my Bible." So saying, Gus patted his hip pocket where he kept his Bible. "I'll read you a little and see if it will help you to reconsider your sin." He then drew out his Bible and started reading a passage which he apparently considered fitting for the occasion. I pleaded with him to go to Candle, and tried to arouse his sympathy by telling him that I was sick. But it was no use. He carried the gun everywhere with him, even laying it beside him when he ate. Each now cooked his own meals. At night Gus would prowl around, read the Bible, pray for hours at a time, and sing hymns. I was getting worn out trying to keep on my guard, lest I be overcome in the night. We had plenty of dogs, and I schemed to get away, leaving some with Gus, but not enough so that he could catch up

Gus now insisted upon chopping all the wood, telling me that he would not trust me with the axe. One day

when we were short I hitched up most of the dogs under the pretense of getting some new wood, but Gus was suspicious and walked behind me, pointing the gun at me all the while.

I grew desperate. It was only a matter of time before Gus would "get" me, as I was repeatedly reminded whenever we were in the cabin together. Finally I tried a new tack. I said to him: "All right, Gus — what would you do if I confessed my sins?"

"You are a murderer at heart; therefore I should feel it my duty to take life for life."

"But you believe in the Bible, and, according to that, judgment must come before punishment or before a life can be taken. If you think I am guilty you should at least take me before the marshals or a judge in Candle and let me confess; otherwise your soul would be as damned as mine."

"You are right," Gus agreed. "You are my prisoner, and in the name of God I shall see to it that you do not escape the punishment you deserve."

The next day we started for Candle, with broken trails ahead for fifty miles. Gus rode in the sled with his gun, making me go ahead breaking trail on snowshoes. When we made camp he lay with the gun across his chest, always with the muzzle pointing at me. Each night before going to bed he would go on his knees in the tent opening, praying to be saved from the Koyukuk Indians and in the same breath cursing me for conspiring against him. With rolling eyes, he would say that the Supreme Being had told him to destroy me. I would hold up my hand and say,

"Judgment first," and he would calm down. I thought I should be mad myself before we reached Candle.

After a terrible week of traveling we finally got to town. As soon as we arrived Gus made me sit down on the sled while he went running back and forth shouting, "Here is a murderer who must be punished. He is brought to justice." A crowd gathered, respectful of the rifle across the handlebars of the sled. Gus tore up and down shouting for the judge. They sent for the marshal, and I was put in irons. When the excitement had subsided a little I tried to tell them that the man was mad, but no one believed me. To make things worse, I knew no one in the town who could vouch for *my* sanity.

The more I pleaded my innocence, the more my partner tried to convince the judge of my guilt by telling wild stories of attempted murder made up out of his poor demented mind. He finally brought suspicion upon himself by tying his dogs outside the jail and then starting to preach a sermon, sing hymns, and so on. It was too much for the people of the town who witnessed his strange actions. He calmed down when he saw me in handcuffs, but it was not long before he was off again. The next day he and I changed places, and I left town as he was being tied into a sled, bound for an asylum.

When I arrived in Nome I stopped at a saloon where were some of the miners in from the creeks. There was much discussion of a claim the saloon keeper, Mr. Mooney, had been prospecting. It had a likely location, though nothing had yet been found to make prospecting worth while. Over in the corner was a young Scandinavian sailor



who had been working at one mine and another for some time. He had saved up three thousand dollars and had come in to Mr. Mooney's saloon to celebrate. Mooney, who knew that the boy had some money, kept treating him. The sailor imbibed freely and before long was exceedingly drunk. Mooney saw his chance and promptly sold the boy the claim, extracting the three thousand dollars in short order while his victim was under the influence of whiskey. A deed was made out on the spot. The sailor awoke the next day with nothing in the world but a splitting headache and with his hard-earned savings in Mr. Mooney's pocket. He could not in the least recollect what had happened to his money until he found the deed for the saloon keeper's claim.

The boy was broken-hearted. He went to Mooney and demanded his money back, but Mooney held that a deal was a deal and matters must stand as they were. So the boy went back to his cabin, ready to start in over again shoveling at one of the mines. He told his experience to his partner in the cabin, who advised him to set out and see what he could do with the claim. He told him that as long as he had paid three thousand dollars for it he might at least have a look at what he had bought. After much arguing, it was finally settled that the sailor and his partner should go prospecting. They went and looked the claim over, but when they saw all the holes and no gold they returned to town, and the sailor, Nils by name, went to look for a job at the mines. But there was no opening for him at the time, so he went back to his partner and told him that he would have another chance at his claim if the

partner would grubstake him. It was agreed that in return the partner was to get one third of anything that was found. A shaft was sunk, taking weeks of hard labor. When they reached bed rock they found rich pay, and the claim developed into one of the richest ever discovered in Alaska. They cleaned up hundreds of thousands. Nils went back to Mooney's saloon and treated the house, and offered to sell the claim back to Mooney for eight hundred thousand dollars.

It was in the saloons that the gossip passed around: men frequented them much the same as the old-timers of a small town gather at the village store in the evening, sitting around swapping yarns. On the same evening that Mooney's claim was sold to Nils a great character known as Two-Story John was holding forth on his visit to the States. John, whose abnormal height had given him his nickname, was an old sourdough who had mined in Dawson, in Circle City, and in Nome, and after striking gold he had gone to the States to "see the world." I walked over and joined the group at John's table listening to him recount his experiences.

He had reached the point in his story where he had arrived in Denver. He told how he had stopped at the best hotel, where there were a number of guests. Feeling rather lonesome, he spoke to several of them, as he would have done in Alaska, but without a word they looked him over and moved to another chair. He went to the bar and called for drinks for the house, but he had to drink alone. He could not understand these people, so he decided to move on to California. The last night before he was to

leave a rather distinguished-looking gentleman took a chair beside him and spoke to him agreeably. John was flattered by the man's attention, especially as this was the first person who had showed any signs of friendliness. They supped together, and the stranger suggested that the following day they should breakfast together and go sight-seeing. John was so pleased to have a companion that he changed his plans about going to California. The man proved to be a very interesting companion, with all the promise of real friendliness. Before they retired that night plans had been made to go to Pike's Peak.

John had agreed to wait for his friend, so he dropped into a chair in the lobby to pass the time until he should turn up. Time went on; he read the morning paper; but there were no signs of his friend. John finally got tired of waiting and went up to the man's room, only to find that he had left. At the desk he asked for information. The clerk was exceedingly disdainful.

"Oh, you mean that lunatic! Well, the fact is the police have been after him for days; they grabbed him here and carried him back to his asylum, from which he escaped a week ago."

John's pride was crushed: his one friend had turned out to be a lunatic. He decided he was not cut out for city life, and took the next boat back to Alaska.

## VII

### WINTER DIGGING

ONE day I was sent with several other men to a claim on the east side of the company's holdings. A dump was being taken out and the crew needed reënforcements. The dirt was hoisted to the surface and landed at the top of a frame, from which it was dumped and then sluiced with the snow water in the spring. After I had worked there two days the foreman told me that the people on the next claim were "drifting" into our ground secretly. No one was allowed to go into their mine; representatives from other companies were refused admittance. Hence everything seemed to indicate that they were drifting toward our claims. In fact, a workman who had been in town celebrating too freely confided the truth to a man working for my company. All proceedings in our mine were concentrated on the easterly face. We were driving in parallel drifts to get as far as possible before the other outfit reached too much of the pay streak. Working double shifts, we were getting hundreds of dollars to the pan. We were so close to the next mine that we could hear the men driving their points and the sound of their picks through the wall of dirt which separated us.

One of our men on the dump told the foreman that they had put on a couple of extra men at the other mine. We

had been using six-foot points, but these were now exchanged for ten-footers. From the sounds we knew that we should break through after one more twelve-foot thaw. The thaw was set one morning early, the plan being to work as fast as possible taking it out and thus break into the other mine during the night. After we had finished steaming we took off the ten-foot point on one battery and instead used five points to the head. We had chosen a twenty-foot face in the drift that seemed to be the one that would break through first, and we were ready with two batteries of five points each, one set of ten, and one set of six. There was one man for each point. Then we started to take out the dirt. We worked in a cloud of vapor, the hot gravel in the lower drift making it appear like a huge steam bath, but work was pushed with feverish haste, in order to get out the thaw before the day crew of the other mine came on and got possession of our ground. In those days possession was certainly nine tenths of the law.

About four o'clock in the morning we broke through; the opening was cleared, and several of us crawled in at the same time, each dragging along a point. When we had crawled further in we came face to face with several men with guns, who ordered us to move back or take the consequences. At that moment our steam was turned on. I was watching one of our points; it was close up to a man's face when the steam burst forth. He screamed with pain as it hit him in the face. In a few seconds the boiling vapor was issuing from all of our points. We advanced abreast: men were cursing and scrambling through the break, and several shots were fired. It was a fearful fight



in the terrific heat of the steam: anyone too close to the point was burned or seared. The place was full of moaning men, writhing with agony. Guns were useless; the candles had gone out and the oil lanterns had been broken. In the *mêlée* two of our men began to fight each other in the darkness before they discovered that they belonged to the same party. So we advanced, slowly, with our points spouting steam.

One of our men had been shot in the shoulder and was lying up against the wall of the drift, calling for help. The steam was now turned off and we could light our candles and take observations of our surroundings. Apparently our opponents had been driven to their own shaft. Some of our men were left to watch the enemy's main drift, with points ready to turn on steam in case of trouble. The draft coming from the shaft kept the drift ahead fairly clear, while those who were behind the points were protected by our own steam. Our opponents evidently had not expected us to attack in this manner. We found out afterward that they had hired the toughest gunmen to be found in Nome to help hold the ground, but against the steam and in the darkness they were helpless.

We had few serious casualties as a result of this escapade, though how much damage was done on the other side we never knew exactly. It leaked out, however, that several men were sent to hospitals for burns and other injuries. In a few days we took out the pay, and in the meantime a lawsuit was started to recover damages.

As time went on I was gradually promoted until I had charge of the underground winter digging in the Discov-

ery Mine on Little Creek. The mine was practically worked out. We were taking out the last pillars that supported the roof, which was overburdened with fifty feet of thick frozen clay, gravel, and muck. But the ground was rich and in spots pans of gravel would run into hundreds of dollars. Hence every possible bit of the pay streak was thawed loose and hoisted up to the surface to be sluiced.

The work went on until the water began to run in the spring. This added the element of danger, as at any moment the mine might be flooded. Every day the roof caved in in new places. Under me were men of several nationalities, among them Swedes, Montenegrins, Russians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Italians, Belgians, and one Egyptian. The Egyptian was a regular Hercules for strength, and many claimed that he was the strongest man in Alaska. One day I was cutting timber at the top of the shaft when I heard shouts of "Come down, Boss! Come down!" I was sure someone had been buried under a slab of frozen earth. I went down the ladder faster than I have ever done since, nearly losing my hold on the icy rungs.

When I landed at the bottom of the shaft the pump tender told me to hurry — somebody was being killed. I had been out in bright daylight for so long I could hardly see at first. However, I ran in through the main drift, and soon came upon what appeared to be a battle between a Montenegrin and a Russian. The Russian had a point header in his hand, and was swinging it at the Montenegrin, who in turn was using an eighteen-inch Stillson wrench to protect himself. One man was on the ground trying to

struggle to his feet, the other was standing against the wall, wiping blood from his face, and each was talking loudly in his own tongue. In the dim candlelight dark, dirty faces appeared in the drifts, while the steam points sizzled and rumbled in the face of the drift. Stones and dirt were slipping from the roof as I ran up to the fighters, jumped between them, and pushed them apart. Just as I did so the candles went out and I felt a glancing blow on the side of my head. I fell to the ground in a heap with another man. Somebody lit the candles. My head was bleeding as I disentangled myself from the Montenegrin. He had let his wrench fly at the Russian and had missed his man, hitting me instead. I had a nasty wound in my head which stayed with me for some time as a reminder of the fight underground.

About this time a small strike was made up north in the Good Hope Country. Some Laps made the discovery and staked a number of claims. They had no money with which to prospect, and eventually came to Nome and asked me for a grubstake. I put up a little money, shipped them provisions in the summer by boat, and later went overland myself by dog team, hauling extra provisions which had been stored in a sod igloo bought for that purpose at Good Hope Bay. Food in that vicinity was very scarce, but there seemed to be plenty of fresh meat in the way of caribou or reindeer. I never saw the meat being brought to camp, but always in the morning there would be fresh meat — hind quarters or fore quarters — hanging in the shed. I asked questions, but I was always told that someone had killed it. The reindeer in that part of the country belonged

to the Eskimos and according to Hoyle should not have been shot. One morning Uncle Hans came in, clad in furs and carrying two pairs of extra mukluks. I asked him where he had been, as his cabin was only one claim away. He replied that he had been out caribou hunting. I asked him how that was possible in the middle of the night.

"Well," said the hunter, "I got them just the same."

Uncle Hans loved his whiskey, and some of the boys had brought him back a bottle. After he had consumed a good portion of the stuff he began to get confidential.

It seemed that during the day he would sight a herd of reindeer belonging to the Eskimos and during the dark and stormy nights he would lasso a deer, put on its feet mukluks turned backwards, and lead the animal home. The tracks appeared to be those made by a man; they always led away from camp and toward the herd, and to any suspicious herder they were obviously not the tracks of a reindeer. When Uncle Hans finally sobered up and realized he had told us the secret of his hunt he insisted he was merely telling a story; but however that may have been, we never ran out of deer meat during that entire winter.

In 1909 my company sent me up to Council district to bring down some air drills. Forty miles from Council City was an old silver mine which had long been abandoned. It was the first white man's camp on Seward Peninsula, and had been worked long before the gold was discovered. When I arrived there I explored the sur-

roundings, and found big log houses standing idle, used only occasionally by the Eskimos as hunting and reindeer camps. I located the mine and found the machinery in a fair state of preservation, but as the mine was high up on a mountain we spent some time getting it out. The sled, loaded with drills, had to be lowered down the mountain side with ropes.

Shortly before we left I roamed around the camp, and up on the hills I found two lone graves surrounded by a picket fence. On the headstone of one, crudely carved, I read, "McCormack 1878." The guide whom I had hired at Council, an old man who had worked there, told me about the two graves.

It appeared that one day when the mine was running a solitary man stumbled into camp, sick and exhausted. He was too weak to explain anything except that his name was McCormack. Shortly after he died. At that time there were no other white men living on the whole of Seward Peninsula. Indeed, there were no white men for several hundred miles in any direction. No one ever discovered who the man was or where he came from. How he managed to get there will always be a mystery. The other headstone read, "Hans Knutsen, born in Norway." The guide told me that this man had been sinking a shaft. He had drilled his holes, put in his charge, and lit the fuse. But when he started to climb up the steep ladder, it broke and he fell, just as the charge went off. This had happened thirty years before my visit. It seemed strange indeed to find a countryman who had come so far from home so many years before the gold rush. He was one of the



many pioneers who lost their lives blazing the trails, making it easier for those who came afterward.

I scrambled down the hillside in the dark, glad to be with my companion again after the loneliness of those solitary graves. He told me more interesting stories over his pipe as we sat curled in our sleeping bags. Long into the night the stories went on — some tragic, some comic. He told me about an erstwhile partner of his who was up on the Koyuk River in the middle of the mosquito season. He had been out prospecting, but, running out of food, had started back to Koyuk Village. A heavy shower overtook him and soaked him to the skin, so when it stopped raining he made a big fire and undressed, hanging his clothes close to the fire to dry. There were swarms of mosquitoes, but the smoke kept them off. Suddenly he saw a rabbit close by, and grabbing his gun he started after it. The rabbit disappeared in the grass and low willows. He chased it, catching an occasional glimpse, but not able to get a shot. He was hungry and felt he had to have the rabbit, so he kept on until he got it.

By now the mosquitoes were tormenting his bare back, and he returned to the fire as fast as he could. When he got there he found that his clothes had burned to ashes. He was twelve miles from the nearest habitation, with no clothes, and the mosquitoes were fairly eating him alive. The torture was almost unbearable. He ran for two and a half hours back to town, rushing in like a crazy man, naked as a child and covered with blood.

No one has any conception of what this mosquito season is in certain parts of Alaska. They have driven people out

of their minds more than once in locations where there has been no protection against their torment.

I had no sooner returned from my trip to the silver mine than a trip was arranged for me to the Kougarok. I carried a passenger in my sled and the going was hard. We got in a bad blow on the Nome River Divide and could just see the outline of an Eskimo team that was going on ahead. We passed it a few miles down below the United States roadhouse on Nome River.

We had the wind on the side. My partner was driving the team, while I was on skis hanging by the snub-line, to relieve the dogs of my weight. It was getting dark and due to the snow flurries it was hard to see the leader, but now and then I caught a glimpse of him struggling on bravely in the right direction. The leader's name was Kvick — a dog with such wonderful trail sense that he could always be depended upon. This time I had a number of short-haired mongrels in the team, and they were trying to swing the outfit off with the wind, but I could see Kvick working like a hero to keep the straight line toward the roadhouse, a few miles on ahead.

The blizzard grew so bad that we could not see the lead end at all. Suddenly I saw my partner disappear, and the next thing I knew I felt myself falling through space, to land in a high snowdrift, the tips of my skis pointed deep in. My feet up in the ski straps and my head in the snow, I was losing my breath. I worked my arms desperately to extricate myself, and after struggling for a while succeeded in working my way out. Glancing around, I discovered that we had fallen over a forty-foot precipice. The team



DOG SLEDGES ON THE TRAIL

had gone over first and sixteen dogs were piled on top of each other; the sled and my partner lay in a heap close by. His head was against the sled, and he seemed to be in a dazed condition. He had struck his head in his fall, and it was some time before I could arouse him and untangle the dogs.

The snow was drifting in fast and it was hard for the dogs to make any progress, so I went ahead to break trail. Soon we came out of the hollow on to the flat wind-swept country. We decided it might be necessary to camp for the night, as to try to spot the roadhouse in that blizzard would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. And we had given Kwick a chance to do his best to find the right trail. It blew harder as we got down on the open flats of the tundra, and soon the sled came to a dead stop. I saw that we were right up beside the door of the roadhouse, with the dogs piled against it in an endeavor to get into shelter from the blizzard. The roadhouse keeper came out to help put up the dogs, in the meantime telling us that an Eskimo's team had just come in with news that two white men had passed him on the Divide and must be lost. They had been about to send out a searching party. Only a few weeks later two men were actually lost on the same Divide. One froze both feet; the other suffered almost as badly.

I now spent the winters making long trips by dog team carrying passengers to the various places of occupation. Once I took Stevenson, the manager of my company, to Hot Springs in the Kougarok. It was in the short days of the winter, and as we traveled only by daylight we made

no more than twenty-five miles the first day. On the way we were passed by the team of Colonel Crimmins and his sergeant, who were also bound for Hot Springs with their fine string of Siberian dogs. Though they were taking their time, hunting as they went, they traveled twenty miles further on that day than we did. The next day was very stormy. We saw the tracks of the Army team now and then where the wind had not covered them with snow, but as we went on we could see that there was a hard blizzard blowing high up on the Golden Gate Divide, and that the snow was drifting up there like giant clouds of smoke. We had been over the Divide so often that we knew what the cloud meant — indeed, it was here that we had fallen over the precipice.

We decided not to attempt the Divide, as it was getting late, so we drove to the Iron Creek roadhouse and camped there, four miles from the Divide. We hoped that the Army team had also taken shelter. It was blowing hard even down on the flats, and we were worried that the others might have lost their way, as they were far from experienced dog mushers.

We left Iron Creek the next morning and hit for the Divide. It was forty below and the wind right in our faces. The blizzard grew worse as we climbed the mountain, and my dogs' faces were continually icing up with a shell of ice and snow, covering their eyes so that they could scarcely see. After ten or fifteen minutes my leader, this time Old Suggen, seemed to reel. He veered to either side of the course, trying his best to follow the right trail. He had been over the Divide several times before and I had no



worry about his taking us there, if his eyes and nose were clear. Every now and then I stopped the team to go up and scrape the ice off his face with my mittens. I would work back through the team, cleaning the face of every dog, then go on for a few minutes, only to repeat the process, all of us fighting for every inch of the way.

At times the wind blew so hard that Suggen would have to crawl over the hard-packed surface of the snow, cowering down to keep from being blown into the team. Sometimes we stopped entirely, and the dogs did their best to dig their claws into the hard snow to prevent their being blown into a bad tangle. Between squalls we moved on, with both Stevenson and me working all we could to help the dogs. It was impossible for us to expose our faces to the wind, for in an instant they would have been frozen. Our parka hoods were drawn tight around our heads, and we leaned forward to struggle against the furious blinding blizzard. Not for a moment did we worry about our course: that was Suggen's job, and he would attend to it if we could keep the ice from his face.

With a temperature of forty below and with a fifty-mile gale blowing directly in one's face it is a man's job to plug on. It took hours to get over the Divide, and in spite of my precaution my face was frozen when we arrived at Hot Springs. We found that the Army team had arrived a short time before us, and the sergeant, who had been badly frozen, was just being thawed out. They had spent the night on the Divide, not being able to face the storm or find the trail. One was wrapped up in the canvas, while the other had to keep walking around him to try to keep

from freezing; but they froze just the same. The sergeant was in a serious condition, and it took hours to get the frost out of his feet. Obviously he needed immediate medical attention, so it was suggested that I should take him back to Nome to the hospital. It was a dangerous task in that blizzard, but it had to be done to save his feet, so we wrapped him in robes and I lashed him to the sled and we started on our way. At the Springs it was not blowing as hard, but we could still see the cloud of whirling snow up on the Divide. When we got there it was as if we were going into a great bag of fine gritty particles of snow, stinging and cutting into our faces like bits of ground glass. As I looked back it seemed as if we were swallowed up by the cloud that enveloped us.

We had the wind now on our backs, and the dogs were running at such a pace it was almost impossible to keep the sled right side up over the windrows of snow that had been piled up by the blizzard. We could see nothing ahead or to the sides. Sometimes our sled would leap over the snowdrifts, often making a drop of several feet, and it was like trying to walk a tight-rope to land the sled on its runners, at the same time standing on the narrow strips of wood extending back from the sled. It was also a difficult task to keep it from running over the dogs as they tore down the steep mountain side. It needed one foot continually on the brake, sometimes both feet, with the fifty-mile gale blowing us ahead at terrific speed.

We finally arrived on the flats of Pilgrim River, where it was calmer; yet there was still the danger that Suggen would not find the right crevasse in the steep west-side

canyon of the river. The river flowed for a number of miles between perpendicular cliffs, making it possible to get down through narrow crevasses in only one or two places. If we missed the right one it meant a drop of two hundred feet and crashing on to the ice below. I tried to check the speed, but it was no use — the wind and the dogs drove us ahead in spite of the brake. I said nothing to my passenger, for there seemed to be nothing to do or say, but only to go on and depend on my leader. As usual, he was right; he found the gap in the canyon, and we landed on the river and traveled along comfortably sheltered by the high banks for miles. We landed at Fort Davis late in the evening, having covered seventy-five miles. I turned the sergeant over to the doctor, who immediately gave him medical attention. I believe he spent months under the doctor's care, but his feet were saved.

## VIII

### THE KNIGHT OF THE TRAIL

I HAD been superintendent of the ditches for some time when one noon the cook at my camp came to me and asked me to come to the kitchen. It seemed that a young woman had arrived there and was hysterically crying and gesticulating, talking excitedly in Norwegian, which the cook could not understand. He could only gather that she frequently mentioned my name, and he wanted me to come out and see what she was trying to tell him. I left my dinner and went to the kitchen. To my amazement, I came face to face with Lisa, who had been our cow-barn maid at my home in Norway. She was obviously relieved and pleased at my appearance, and I asked her to come to my office, where we could talk. She came willingly enough, and I made her as comfortable as possible in my "office" tent, while we talked of Skjervoy and my people in Norway.

I succeeded in calming her, though the tears kept coming to her eyes, and I could plainly see that she was in great trouble. I asked her what she was doing in Nome and how it happened that she had come there. Her story was pathetic, and typical of that of more than one girl who had found her way to the gold fields. During the telling of her experiences she broke down and sobbed at intervals, and

at times she lapsed back into a state of hysteria; but I let her take her time, and did not interrupt her. I listened to her intently, feeling desperately sorry for her.

"After you left Norway," she began, "I stayed on at Skjervoy helping with the work. About six months ago I was at Giaver's getting some supplies for the house, and while I was waiting a good-looking, well-dressed man came in and I heard him talking to Giaver. He had just come from Nome and was telling about the life. I listened to his news and heard him tell Giaver about you. Suddenly he turned around and saw me. As Giaver went to wait on another customer he began talking to me, and I listened to him." Here she broke down and burst into a fit of sobbing, while I waited for her to go on.

"He was a stranger to me, but he began making remarks about how foolish I was to spend my time in a cow barn when I could be earning seven dollars a day in his restaurant at Nome, where money was so free. He saw that I was interested. He told me the town was full of rich young miners and that all wages were high. He had come to Norway to hire waitresses for his restaurant, and before I left Giaver's he asked me if I would care to go to Nome. I told him I would think it over, and he agreed to meet me again the next afternoon at Giaver's, when I was to give him my answer.

"I went home and thought it over. You know of my family. They were always so poor, and since Paul was drowned at the fishing grounds there had been no one to help them. Perhaps, I thought, here was a chance for me to make them all well off, and I considered it seriously."



She stopped for a moment, lowering her eyes as she continued: "There was another reason why I wanted to come — I was glad of a chance to see you again."

I was somewhat dumbfounded at the last statement, as I had never thought of Lisa other than as my mother's servant, though she was pretty enough in her rustic way. I felt a little uncomfortable that I had had any part in luring this unfortunate girl into what seemed to be a serious predicament. She sensed my embarrassment, and as I made no comment, not knowing what to say, she went on with her story.

"Well, I decided to come to Nome and accepted his proposition. I thought it was strange that he brought no other girls, but for some reason I took the excuses which he gave when I mentioned this to him. Upon our arrival in New York he told me that I should have to pose as his wife to simplify matters with the immigration people. I was too stupid to refuse, as his conduct had been gentlemanly all the way over, but I saw that his intentions were far from honorable as soon as we had passed the immigration inspector. Most of the trip across the States we sat up in a day coach, and I was worn out by the time we arrived at Seattle. As soon as we got there he hired a room. He then left me and told me to set about earning some money to pay back what he had spent on me already. I now realized what his purpose had been in bringing me here, and I was frightened and wretched, not knowing what to do.

"I had no money, and could not speak any English, and there was nothing to do but place myself at his mercy. I

begged and pleaded with him, but it was no use. Finally, after he had gone away, I stole out into the street to find a policeman. He could not understand me, nor could I make out what he was saying, but I remember he kept repeating the word 'husband,' and he forced me back into the house.

"It soon came time for the boats to leave for Nome, and though I was sick and desperate I had no choice but to accompany Pete, though I fought and struggled against him until I was exhausted. My one thought was to reach Nome and find you, believing that you would help me. We had been here a week when Pete finally got disgusted and told me I was no use to him at present. He slammed the door in my face, cursing and insulting me as he told me to shift for myself. He said he would get back what he had spent on me, and I need n't try to double-cross him.

"He left me in a little cabin on the edge of the tundra and went away. A girl who lived in the next cabin knocked at the door that afternoon and invited me to go back with her and have something to eat. She was friendly and wanted to help me. I told her my story, but she just shook her head and said it looked hopeless. She too was a Norwegian girl, from Bergen. She meant to be kind, but she made me feel more desperate than ever by the stories she told me, for it seemed that Pete had brought me to a bad district and she was sure he would never let me out of his clutches. He and his kind were paying the marshals to keep quiet about their business.

"She told me that if I went out I should be arrested on some pretext or other and brought back. The landlords

demanded high rents for the cabins, and the merchants overcharged the girls, all working together for their share, while the girls had to pay. I told her I wanted to get a decent job, but she said as soon as they found out about me they would discharge me and I should be no better off. She said it was always the same. The girls just got discouraged, and either stuck, making the best of it, or committed suicide. She advised me to stick, and when Pete came back to hide a part of whatever money I had made and not give it to him. She had come there in much the same way as I, and had decided to stick. She terrified me with her own story. Her man had promised to marry her and she had believed him until she discovered the truth. When she found out she tried to shoot him, but she did not kill him. He grabbed her gun, threw her on the floor, and after removing all the remaining cartridges, he went out. So she is still there.

"After dark I went into town and found out where you were, and hoped I might get a job in your camp, thinking that if I paid Pete half of my earnings he might leave me alone. Your cook did not seem to understand me, and I refused to go until I had seen you."

Here she concluded her story.

Poor Lisa! Yet I believed I could help her, and I certainly intended to try. But her neighbor was right—it was a difficult matter. I tried to console her, and hired her temporarily as a waitress at my camp, which sent her into another paroxysm of weeping from gratitude and relief. She began work that evening, and for some time seemed happy and contented; so I gathered that Pete had left her

alone and that she had been able to save some money. Her one ambition now seemed to be to make enough to get back to Norway.

Meanwhile I made investigations. It was true that the marshals were bribed, and wherever I went for help the answer was always the same: "Don't be a fool, boy. She is only playing you, and you will just get the worst of it." I interested in her case men in whose homes I figured she might get a position, but their wives objected, so my progress was slow. I wanted to get her safely situated where Pete could have no jurisdiction over her actions. Such men were the worst parasites of the gold-mining communities.

Not long before this a friend of mine had settled his score with one of them. Under somewhat similar circumstances, a girl had gone to him for help, and he decided upon a violent course of procedure. He went to her cabin, and when her molester came in he offered to buy him a drink. The man accepted, and as he took the glass the young miner grabbed his hand and, taking him by surprise, got a strong hold on him and threw him to the floor. He tied him hand and foot. Then he took out a knife and cut two deep cross-gashes across his cheek. After thus branding him my friend took the girl with him, hitched up his dog team, and drove off to his camp. Shortly afterwards they were married.

I decided that my best policy was diplomacy, and that if I could make friends with one of the marshals the rest would be easy.

Just at this time in Nome athletic meets of various kinds

were on — sometimes long-distance races indoors, sometimes boxing and wrestling. I stopped in at the big Eagle Hall one evening to watch the boys training. Blake, who was coaching them, was considerably upset over the fact that a man who was to have been the chief contender against the soldiers from the Fort had given out. He was lamenting his mishap when one of the boys from my own island in Norway saw me standing in the corner watching proceedings. He knew that I had done a little wrestling, and suggested to Blake that he ask me to take the place of the man who had given out at the last minute.

He came over to me and asked me if I would fill in. I recognized him as a marshal, and thought this might be a chance to do him a good turn and gain his support on behalf of Lisa. I had never wrestled in this country and was not familiar with the holds they used. However, having my reasons for obliging him, I consented. The match was scheduled for two days following, and I went out on the floor to learn the holds, and the next day returned to practise them.

When the time came for the contest I was more than a little concerned to see that my opponent was a man at least thirty pounds heavier than I. However, I sized him up as cumbersome and slow, and therefore concluded that my speed gave me some chance of victory. I let him toss me around a little at first, hoping to wear him out a bit. I soon saw that he was planning to rush for me and end it quickly, so I was ready to take the opening he gave me, and threw him to the floor instead. I had his shoulders securely pinned down and he was offering no resistance.



The referee told me to get up, and we discovered that the poor devil had three broken ribs. It was an unlucky throw, and I was as surprised as he at what I had done, and exceedingly sorry that I had been so violent.

Blake was my friend afterward for helping him in a pinch, and my opponent proved to be a good sport. When I thought it best I confided Lisa's story to Blake, but his first reply was the same as the rest — that she would get me in the end. I explained my childhood association with Lisa and told him I was perfectly willing to take my chances on her "getting" me. Blake was a good fellow, and I felt sure that with his support we could relieve Lisa of further annoyance. Blake was fortunate enough to interest the wife of one of his friends in her, and it was arranged that she was to go to them. I had planned to tell my good news to Lisa after she had finished her work that night, but when I sat down to supper I found that she had left camp. The boys told me she had gone with a man whose description tallied in detail with that of Pete, her captor. I had no doubt that he had somehow learned of our plan, and, not wishing to lose his hold on Lisa, had lured her to the cabin with some scheme.

I went to talk it over with Blake, and we decided to go to the cabin and see if Pete was there. If he was, we would use force. If not, we would kidnap Lisa. When we reached her little cabin we were surprised to find it in total darkness, and with all the appearances of having been hastily vacated. We knocked and pounded on the door, but there was no answer. I began to think that perhaps the marshal was right — that I had been fooled. Just as

we were about to leave, the girl in the neighboring cabin called out to us that Lisa had left late in the afternoon by dog team with Pete. She did not know in which direction they had gone. I could not believe I had been hoodwinked, and told Blake so. He was inclined to believe it was a repetition of the old story, but suggested that we go back to town and find out if anyone had seen them drive off. We went into the largest saloon, where we should be most likely to get news of teams leaving Nome, as in those days everyone was curious about everyone else's moves and no doubt someone would have seen them drive out. But nobody knew anything about them.

The sled tracks leading from Lisa's cabin were completely obliterated by the wind of a heavy blizzard blowing in the snow, so we had no clue to follow. We made up our minds to go back and question Blanche, the girl who had befriended Lisa. As we stepped out of the door a messenger was coming in. He was on his way from Blanche's cabin to bring back the drinks her customers had ordered from the saloon. I stopped him and asked him if he knew anything of Lisa. He replied, "Don't bother about that girl." I was irritated at his attitude and believed he knew more than he intended to tell. Catching him roughly around the neck, I landed him in a snow-drift, putting my knee on his chest and pinning him there.

"Suppose you tell me what you know," I said.

He still refused. I remembered the immigrant who had pulled the whiskers of the abusive attendant at the immigration station years ago, and decided to try this on

the messenger. I got his goatee in my hand and gave it a jerk.

“Will you tell me now?”

He tried to reach for his gun, but I had a firm grip on his goatee. Every time he moved I gave another sharp pull at his chin. He finally decided to tell us what he knew.

“Pete took her away in a team this afternoon just after dark. The old girl put up a terrible racket, and he told her to shut up and stop hollering, as he meant to tell anyone who interfered that she was his wife and had gone crazy. That is all I know. For God’s sake don’t tell him I tipped you off. He paid me to keep my mouth shut.”

I let him go, and Blake and I went inside again to talk the matter over. While we were sitting there a man came in who was noted for his fine string of dogs. Every dog driver in Nome had tried to buy them, but he would not sell. He had been drinking heavily, and as he passed us he slapped Blake on the back.

“Hello, boys! Have a drink on me!”

Blake looked up at him. “Have you struck it?”

“Hell, no — sold my dog outfit. Sold team, sled, and all.”

He seemed to be considering his sale.

“It was a good team — damn good; but they were getting old and I’ve got plenty of young ones coming along. Money talks, boys — money talks!”

He then called for drinks for the house. A sudden thought struck me.

"Who bought the dogs, Jim?" I asked.

"Don't know who he was, but he sure did n't know much about driving. I gave him a hand as far as Port Safety, so that he could get used to the team. He was taking his crazy wife to Fairbanks — and, boy, she was sure goofy, screaming and yelling and carrying on in a lingo I could n't understand. He had to hold her down all the way to Safety, and she sure had some bad spells at times. I helped him tie her in the sled to keep her quiet, and started him out of Safety. He offered to pay me to keep quiet, but I did n't take his money. I could n't see who would give a damn where he was going with that crazy wife. The dogs are as hard as nails, and the trails ought to be fair, so I guess they will get there, but he is going to have one hell of a time with that woman of his."

Blake and I had exchanged glances during the story. Blake now leaned over to me.

"That's our man. He is taking her to the big strike at Fairbanks. He must have found out that I had my hand in on the plan to get the girl, and he got scared and bolted. Say, boy, I would love to chase that sport and spoil his little game. The hell of it is that I am on a big sluice-box robbery case and I cannot go."

"See here, Blake," I said, "if I go and bring that girl back, will you give me your word to help her when I get her here, and me if I get in trouble."

"Boy, I am with you. Go to it."

My dogs were also in fine trim, but it would be necessary to get a few more to double up on the speed. We went to Dalvine, who had just come in from Kobuk, and who had

dogs supposed to be good travelers. He was not over-anxious to part with them, but finally consented. About two o'clock in the morning I hit the trail. My dogs were in good condition, and Dalvine's worked in well with them. The blizzard was growing worse all the time, and I was having plenty of difficulty. At Solomon I stopped to make inquiries, and found that a team had passed by but had not stayed. I went on nine miles to Spruce, and I found that a man and woman had spent the night at an igloo belonging to an Eskimo family, but the man to whom I spoke had seen them leave again.

I rested my dogs for a while, then set out after them. It was blowing and snowing so hard that I changed my course to the trail on the ice out on Bering Sea. I could occasionally see tracks of a dog team and sled, but for the most part they were pretty well snowed under. Late that night I got to Cheenik. I found that Lisa and Pete had stayed with an old Lap and that they had avoided the regular roadhouses all along the way. I knew that Pete's knowledge of dogs must be limited, and I also knew that he was making too long drives for his dogs to stand the pace, with his baggage and passenger. Everywhere I stopped they were just ahead of me, but I was gaining on them. I kept forming plans as to what I should do when I caught them, and how I should get Lisa, but one after another I discarded them as soon as they were made. There was nothing to do but leave things in the hands of fate and circumstances.

As I took out on the ice once more from Walla Walla I could see Pete's tracks. There was a good deal of loose



snow, and the sky was cloudy and threatening. There was a storm brewing, and an hour later I was in a strong off-shore blizzard. I knew that at any moment the ice might break and drift out, but I wanted to overtake Pete at Moses, if not before. My leader was tugging away and we were making good time. At Quiktalik I questioned an old Eskimo woman. She informed me, "Team pass by on ice pretty soon," which I understood meant not long ago. I drove on, and the storm increased the further I went from land. I had fifteen miles to cross the bay to Moses. About two hours after I left Quiktalik, just ahead of me I could see a dog team. As I drove up I saw that the man was covered with snow and the wind had driven it into his parka and the dogs' fur. He was standing still as I came up to him, and I could hear him cursing through the storm. Just then I saw a dark streak across the trail. It was open water. The ice had broken off and we were adrift. He shouted to me, "Open water!" "Yes," I said, "just that — open water." My sled was now close to his. He recognized me, and the woman tried to turn her head against the wind as she heard my voice, but the snow blinded her.

"Well," I said, "misery loves company. I guess we might as well make camp — there is nothing else to do. We are drifting straight out into Bering Sea, and it looks as though we shall have plenty of time to think it over."

We drove up behind an ice hummock, putting our sleds to the wind side. Out of a big piece of canvas I rigged up a shelter, and we had to resign ourselves to circumstances and make ourselves as comfortable as possible. It was an

odd situation. I had caught my man, but here we were both adrift on an ice floe together, and it looked as though God Nature would settle our scores for us.

Lisa was blissfully unconscious of the danger, seeming perfectly satisfied in the knowledge that I was there as a member of the strange party. The snow was drifting into our shelter, so out of the hummock I took two big slabs of ice to protect our little camp against the blizzard. As we settled ourselves once more I could see that Pete was terrified. He turned to me and said, "What would you say our chances are?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "God knows. If we have plenty of food and can keep from freezing, and if we live long enough, the wind may turn south and blow us back. We may be here a week or two — maybe months at this time of the year. If we are lucky enough we can then drive ashore, if we are not too far out by that time."

I then asked him where he was bound.

"Fairbanks," he replied.

"I guess it will be Hell instead," I told him consolingly.

He was getting more nervous all the time. I had a heavy sleeping bag and I told Lisa to crawl into it. I piled in under my robe, as I felt sure Pete would do no harm as long as we were in this predicament. He needed my help now, and I had decidedly the upper hand in the situation.

I woke early the next morning, before either Pete or Lisa, and looked around. One of the first things I saw was Pete's gun, and I managed to get it without waking him. At first I thought I would take it out and bury it in the snow, but I thought better of it and tucked it away in

my sled bag instead. We should probably need it, if for no other purpose than to kill a seal when our food supply was gone. For my part, I had come provided with little food, planning to make long drives and put up at road-houses along the way. Pete surely could not have had much either, as he too was depending on the way stations.

The night before, while Pete was outside feeding his dogs, I had asked Lisa if she had gone willingly with him. She told me that she had only left with him because he threatened to shoot her if she refused. I told her I had followed them for the sole purpose of bringing her back with me and I did not intend to return without her, but just how I was going to manage it I did not know.

After breakfast I went outside and took a survey of the conditions. I could see that the wind was already getting to the south, but I kept my knowledge to myself, figuring that my best chance lay in keeping Pete frightened. When I came back I told Pete of a plan I had concocted, hoping to baffle him.

"I believe I shall set out and drive along from floe to floe. I have been adrift before, and I shall manage somehow. At any rate, I am going to try to make shore ice somewhere on the other side of Norton Bay."

"What are the chances?" Pete asked me.

"About ten to one against me, I should say. I shall probably starve, freeze, or fall in between the ice floes — maybe all three; but I prefer it to freezing to death here."

"I guess I will follow along. I don't hanker after being left here."

I shook my head.

"It is foolish for you to attempt it with this lady on your hands. It will be pretty difficult for you to cross the cracks with your load. Besides, my dogs are so much faster, and I am so much lighter, you cannot keep up with me."

"But you can't leave me here to die. Let me go with you. Think of Lisa here."

He was actually pleading with me now, and I could see plainly that it was not Lisa but his own hide he was thinking of.

"Very well," I said. "It would probably be best for me to take her on my sled. If you agree to that, I will lead on. Otherwise you don't move a foot."

He was ready to agree to anything at the moment. As I went to work getting my things on the sled and the dogs harnessed and hitched up, he rushed around to be sure I did not leave him.

When I was ready I put Lisa in my sled on top of my bag and the rest of my load. I drove off before Pete started, following the edge of the ice eastward, hoping to come to a place where I could cross to another cake. I looked around, and saw Pete now a few hundred yards behind, and I was driving my dogs hard to keep out of his way. I had no desire to leave him stranded, villain though he was. Neither did I intend to let him catch me. I struck a piece of smooth ice and my dogs quickened their pace, so that Pete was left far behind. I could still hear him bellowing at me to wait, but I did not stop. I drove for over an hour, and finally came to a place in the lead where there was a huge cake of ice drifting between the floe we were on and a great field of ice to the southeast. I could

see that it had just started to drift away from us. I drove my dogs as hard as I ever drove in my life, trying to make it before it was too late. As we got to the edge of the floe my leader made a flying leap over the water on to the ice cake. One by one the pairs of dogs followed, the sled meantime forming a bridge. I called to Lisa to jump for it, and told her I would make it as best I could. The space grew wider and the rear of the sled went into the water, but the dogs were pulling like demons and it came up over the edge. The ice cake was just large enough to support our weight.

The wind drifted us across the narrow span of water, and I ran the dogs on to the big floe, keeping the sled on the smaller one. I rammed my stopping bar into the ice through the sled, and in that way the dogs were able to hold the ice cake anchored to the big floe. I could see if I let it go it would drift over to Pete's side, but too far down the lead. As the edge of the ice where he was had a point protruding eastward, that might catch the floe, but beyond that there was a vast expanse of water.

Lisa begged me to go on and leave him, but I had my own ideas and I waited for him until he pulled up close by.

"Are you going to leave me?" he shouted.

"Yes," I called back.

He pleaded with me to push the cake over to him.

"On my own conditions," I said. "If you are willing to give up any claim that you have on this girl, and allow her to return with me to Nome, while you hit the trail for Fairbanks."

I did not have long to wait for his answer. Yes, he



would gladly do that. Lisa once again implored me to leave him.

"He will only change his mind as soon as he is safe. Don't trust him."

I doubted his sincerity myself, but I could not leave even a criminal when the chances were that he would never reach shore alone; it would be sheer murder. So I called over to him: —

"I don't trust you. I have made up my mind to leave you."

He promised again, swearing that he would stick to his word.

"Throw your gun into the lead," I ordered.

"I have lost it," he said.

I knew that I had his gun, but I wanted to make sure he had no other.

"Look for it in your sled bag."

He did so, turning it upside down, and I saw that he had none.

"All right, see that you don't go back on your word," I said, as I leaned against an ice hummock and shoved the cake with both feet, starting it slowly towards him.

I waited long enough to make sure the cake reached him, and then drove on. It was growing dark as we approached the other side of the ice field, so we could go no further, and stopped to make camp. I gave Lisa some food and my sleeping bag. I chewed on a little raw dog salmon in order to save what food we could. Pete soon drove up and camped with us. Conversation was strained, to say the least, and I addressed my remarks to Lisa, telling her

of the seriousness of our situation, making sure that my remarks did not escape Pete's ears. I told her all the horrible stories I could think of relative to men and dogs who had perished on ice floes from cold and hunger or by falling into the water and being frozen solid before they could get dry.

My harrowing tales were taking effect and I could see that Pete was panic-stricken. We stayed on the floe all the next day, as it was snowing hard. Soon it stopped and the weather grew milder. The wind came up, and my compass showed that it was blowing from the southeast. Pete had no compass, so I let him worry. Our food was gone by this time and we were now all chewing away on the dog salmon. The following morning I could see that we were close up to the land at Moses, but Pete could not tell the sand spit from the ice, and I did not enlighten him. I told him I would strike out and try to drive somewhere, making him believe another ice floe had closed the open lead, though I knew that we were up against the land ice. I suggested that I should still carry Lisa on my sled, and he readily consented. He followed us, and soon after we reached Moses.

Pete began to grow brave again once he had his feet on land. He was to start out early the next morning and make Bonanza, about forty miles away, stopping at a small roadhouse. While Pete was busy with his dogs I told Lisa to be ready to leave with me before Pete was awake in the morning. I intended to start about four, as I had heard him tell the roadhouse keeper that he planned to pull out at five. I in turn told the old man to put us up food to

last a couple of days, but I hoped to make Cheenik in one run.

Pete was still sleeping peacefully when I woke the next morning, and I could see Lisa moving around behind the curtains which separated the women's quarters from the men's. She soon appeared, and handed me the little bag containing her belongings, and I went out to put it on the sled. When I came in I saw that Pete was awake and was starting to dress. I had my dogs harnessed and hitched, and they were ready to be off as soon as I pulled the slip-knot of the snub-line. It was blowing from the northeast and we should have the wind at our backs. I heard Pete telling the old man who kept the roadhouse that he had lost his revolver on the ice. The old man said that a revolver was no use anyway — a shotgun was the only thing for the trail. Pete replied that you could never tell when any kind of gun might be handy. I began to be suspicious of him. We sat down to breakfast, and Lisa and I ate as fast as possible, finishing just as Pete began. I nodded at Lisa and we left the table. I paid the old man while Lisa was slipping on her parka and mitts. Pete looked up and said, "There is no particular hurry that I can see. I have n't got the dogs hitched up yet." But Lisa said she was going out for a moment all the same. I also put on my parka and mitts and followed her. Lisa was waiting in the sled. Two of my dogs were in a tangle and I ran up to straighten them out. Then I made a jump for the runners and snub-line, and as I did so Pete grabbed me from behind.

"Where in hell do you think you are going?"

Before I could reply he had me on my back in the snow and was sprawling on top of me, cursing, and slamming at my head. I managed to twist over on to my stomach and get to my feet, somewhat dazed from the blows. My fur parka made me clumsy, so as soon as I was free I dashed into the house, banging the door, slipped off my parka, and ran out again, just as Pete was digging into my sled bag and pulling out his gun.

I jumped on him, getting a choke hold around his neck; but his gun was in his free hand, and he fired twice. I threw him to the ground face down, trying to kick the gun out of his hand. Lisa tossed me my dog whip, and I began pounding his hand, which still held the gun, with the loaded butt end. The gun fell from his grasp into the snow. He tore himself loose and rushed for the house. I knew he was about to get the shotgun hanging on the wall, and I went in after him. It was a small room, and by jumping on the table and springing from it I was able to land on his shoulders. He went down under my weight and we rolled around the floor, fighting furiously. Pete got to his feet first, and as I was getting up he struck a heavy blow at my head. Reeling from it, I stumbled over a chair, and as I fell he came down on top of me, grabbing a ketchup bottle from the table as he did so. I looked up and saw Lisa standing over us both with a smile on her face, and I knew she was thinking that the moment of revenge she had longed for had come. She was holding the dog whip in her hand, and with all her strength she brought it down on Pete's head. The bottle dropped to the floor and he fell over against the bunk. His head must have

been entirely solid, for the blow would have killed any ordinary man; but Pete was only badly stunned.

During our brawl the old man calmly took the gun from the wall, removed the shells and put them in his pocket, and replaced it. As Pete came to I advised him once more to attend strictly to his own affairs, stick to his word, and strike out for Fairbanks. I was leaving for Nome, and Lisa was going with me. I told him I was acting for the marshal and if he valued his freedom he had better keep going. He was still on the floor, muttering and swearing, as I backed out of the door, not daring to take my eyes from him. Lisa was again in the sled. I jumped on the runners, jerked the snub-line loose, and we sped off in the morning darkness.

I have neither seen nor heard of Pete since. He went on to Fairbanks, no doubt, and Nome at least was relieved of his presence.

My friend Blake was true to his promise, and Lisa was settled in the position he had found for her. Three years afterwards she married a promising young miner, and I was godfather at the christening of their first child, who I am honored to say was named after me.



## IX

### THE DOG RACER

IN 1907 I heard of a dog race at Snake River, near the town of Nome. Most of the drivers were schoolboys. I was not present, as I was then busy working in the mines. In 1908 the Nome Kennel Club was organized by Albert Fink, who became its president. The idea made rapid headway with the sport-loving public. Until that time, skiing had been the principal out-of-door sport, but with the introduction of new and faster dogs the attention of the public was focused on dog racing. Nearly every man in the community had at one time or another driven a dog team. Even men from the Mediterranean had been forced to resort to this means of travel during the stampedes, or when they engaged in prospecting and mining. The Scandinavians had been most prominent in the use of skis, but dog racing promised a national sport for Alaska.

On April 1 the All-Alaska Sweepstakes race, over a course of 408 miles, was inaugurated. The excitement was intense. Every man and woman in the community who could get there was present at the start in Barracks Square on Front Street. There was a telephone line along the Sweepstakes trail to Candle, the turning point, and the position of each team was reported from stations established along the line to Nome and posted on blackboards

in saloons and other public places. The Board of Trade saloon was the main headquarters of the race, and here the people crowded to read the news on the blackboard and place their bets. Hundreds of thousands of dollars changed hands during those days.

After much discussion a list of rules for the entrants in the race was compiled. The more important provisions were these: —

The race will be started on Front Street opposite Barracks Square, Nome, Alaska, but the judges may, by unanimous consent, on account of stormy weather, postpone the race until a later date.

The route will be from Nome to Safety; thence to Dixon; thence to Topkok Hill; thence over or around Topkok Hill; thence to Timber Roadhouse; thence to Council; thence over the head of Melsing Creek to Boston Creek, across the Fish River Valley to Telephone Creek, over the Divide to Death Valley; thence across Death Valley to Camp Haven; thence to First Chance; thence over the divide into Gold Run; thence to Candle, and from Candle to Nome over the same route.

Teams will start one minute apart, the first team leaving at — o'clock, and the time of each team starting will be reckoned as at — o'clock.

Each team must take all of the dogs with which it started to Candle and return with the same dogs, and none others, to the starting point in Nome.

The team accomplishing this in the least time will be declared the winner of the race, and the team accomplish-

ing this in the second-best time will be declared second.

When any team in the race meets another, the right of way shall belong to the homeward-bound team, and it shall be the duty of the person driving the outgoing team to get out of the way of the homeward-bound team and assist it in passing.

When one team shall overtake another team going in the same direction, the team behind shall have the right of way, and it shall be the duty of the driver in front to pull out of the trail and assist the driver of the team behind in passing; and in the event that one team shall pass another, and the team behind shall hang on to the team in front for half an hour, then the team behind shall have the right of way, and, upon demand of the driver behind, the team ahead shall pull out of the trail and assist the team behind in passing; except that this rule shall not apply on the homeward stretch from Fort Davis to Nome.

At all roadhouses and public stopping places along the route the first team arriving shall have the choice of public stable room, and any interference by any parties afterward arriving is strictly prohibited.

During the race each team and its driver shall have all of the assistance he desires; subject, however, to the following limitations:—

(1) During the race no team shall be allowed at any time in any manner to use any other dogs than those started with.

(2) Pacing in any and all of its forms is strictly prohibited; nor shall any team connected in any way with

any team in the race follow any racing team until all of the racing teams shall have passed the next telephone station; nor shall any such team precede any racing team on the trail by a less distance than one telephone station; and said team or teams shall at all times be subject to the directions of the judges of the race.

(3) No team shall have any person other than the driver take hold of the sled while the team is in motion, which interference is in the driver's power to prevent.

(4) No team shall have any person or persons to instruct the driver while his team is actually traveling.

The cruel and inhuman treatment of dogs by any driver is strictly prohibited, under penalty of losing the race and forfeiture of the owner's team.

Every person entering or driving a team in the race will be required to conduct himself in a perfectly fair and honorable manner, under penalty of forfeiture of the prize and his dog team, and expulsion from the Club.

In awarding the cup and prize money, these rules shall be interpreted by the judges according to their spirit, it being understood that the race is to be awarded on merit, and not on technicality.

The driver of any team quitting the race shall report the same to the judges in Nome before he makes any movement toward returning to the starting point; and thereafter his movements shall be subject to the direction of the judges.

The races shall not be decided by the judges until all of the teams starting in said race have returned to Nome, or the owners thereof waive the right of protest in writ-

ing; and in no event shall such decision be rendered until twenty-four hours after three teams shall have finished the course.

In the event of a driver of a team in the race being behind and away from his sled and team at the finish of the race, the finishing time of such team shall be the time the driver crosses the tape.

It was only in the evening and during the night that I had a chance to watch the progress of the race. However, every spare moment I could get I was there. I remember well how I used to stand around the Board of Trade Saloon glancing at Scotty Allan, Fay Delzene, and John Johnson, and I felt greatly honored if I could speak with them. I thought they were wonderful men and admired their achievements greatly. Little did I think that the day would come when I should be battling my way on the Sweepstakes trail against them! When they came in they would look frostbitten and worn out after the storms and cold they had encountered on the trail, and I envied them their experiences.

Sometime after the beginning of the All-Alaska Sweepstakes there was a small race being held. Someone came to me and said, "Why don't you enter the race?" I looked at him in surprise, for my dogs had never been racing dogs. I had used them traveling all over the Seward Peninsula and the interior of Alaska, but racing with them had never occurred to me. I thought he was joking when he suggested my entering, but apparently he meant it. The idea appealed to me. At first I said "No," but I thought it





SEPPALA AND ONE OF HIS TEAMS

over. My friend urged me, saying I should enter my team for the Moose Burden Handicap, as it was called. The day came, and found me at the starting line! Details of that race are rather hazy in my mind. I do not remember the number I drew, but it was just ahead of a driver who was a young sprinter — probably the best foot racer in Alaska at the time. I started five minutes ahead of him, and he had a good team with larger dogs than mine. My little dogs were unknown as racing dogs, so neither I nor anybody else could tell what they would do. Besides, I had never been a foot racer.

About four miles out I could see Earl, the young sprinter, gradually catching up to me. I drove as hard as I knew how, but I could see Earl, running bareheaded beside his sled, only about a hundred yards behind. All at once, while I was glancing back over my shoulder, my dogs gave a jerk and nearly pulled the sled out of my hand. I looked ahead and saw a buzzard sitting just about a hundred yards away. When the dogs saw the bird they ran like demons. When we got a little closer the bird flew in front of the team just five or six feet above the trail, straight ahead and so low that Earl's dogs did not see him. My dogs kept right on going with tremendous speed. I could see that Earl was beginning to lose ground. The old bird flew on and then sat down on the trail way ahead, but the dogs could see him and never slackened their pace, but ran as hard as they could, determined to catch him.

When I drew nearer, the bird flew up again and straight on ahead. For nearly four miles this kept up. By that time Earl was no longer in sight. The buzzard finally

grew tired of the fun and soared over towards the hill and disappeared, but the spurt had warmed up my dogs, and they maintained a fast pace. I stayed at the appointed destination for four hours, and ate and danced and enjoyed myself immensely.

I was the first to start back, our orders of departure having been arranged by the judges in Nome. The wind began to blow, but it was quarterly on our backs, and my dogs struck out with good speed. I finally arrived at the finish line in Nome — the winner. Here I was, unexpectedly a victor in a dog race. Surely no one was more surprised than I. I have always attributed my start in dog racing to the buzzard on the trail, for the winning of that race inspired me to begin my career as a dog racer.

It was in 1913 that a man came to me and said that he had bought a group of Siberian females and puppies and wanted me to take charge of the raising and training of the young dogs. He said he was going to make Captain Amundsen a present of a team of Siberians next year, at which time it was planned that Amundsen was to come to Nome with an expedition on his way to the North Pole. Hence about fifteen dogs, mostly puppies and females, arrived at my camp, and as soon as the snow began to fly I started to break in the oldest ones.

The Kennel Club officials asked me to enter the All-Alaska Sweepstakes with those half-trained young dogs, and Scotty Allan was also among those who assured me that I had a good team and should enter. I believe that some of those who told me to enter thought I did not have a chance to win with those young dogs, particularly as I

was inexperienced in the art of dog racing. I myself did not think much of the idea or my chances, and yet in my heart I really wanted to go.

It was a very expensive proceeding to train for the races, and I could hardly see my way clear to undertake it. I spoke to my friend who had urged me to go in the Burden Race, and he was equally ready with his advice to enter my team in the All-Alaska Sweepstakes. He encouraged me by saying, "You might not win this time, but some day you may." Again I listened to his advice. My decision was made so late that I had no time to drive to Candle over the course, as was customary for those intending to take part, in order to put dog feed along the way, etc. I had to get someone else to do this for me. When the day of the race came my knees fairly shook with excitement as I stood at the starting line with those famous dog drivers. We finally got under way, and as soon as I left the line my nervousness vanished.

It was good weather in Nome, but about forty miles out it started to blow. At Topkok I ran into a blizzard going up Allen Creek. It was a new trail to me and to my leader, Suggen, practically the only seasoned dog in my team. He took me up what I figured was the wrong side of the creek, but not knowing the country I took a chance that he was right. According to the map I had studied I should be traveling due north. The wind and the drifting snow made it hard to get my bearings, so I was merely following my compass. It was even impossible to see any distance ahead of my leader, but we kept going in what we thought was the right direction.

According to my watch we should have been far beyond where we were. Suddenly we started downhill, getting into a deep gully, and there before I knew it my dogs piled up against the door of a little cabin. We were lost, I knew, for there should have been no cabin on that portion of the trail. I stayed for a few minutes until the storm subsided somewhat, but I had no dog feed, and had no idea in which direction we should head to get on to the Sweepstakes trail. I decided it was best to drive south, hit the coast trail, and make a new start. The dogs had broken in the door and piled into the little cabin for shelter from the storm, and had got into such a tangle that it was almost impossible to find the beginning or the end.

When I made up my mind to set forth again I tried to get the dogs started, but they hated to leave the shelter. Eventually I straightened them out, and we struck off up the hill towards the south. The wind drove us on at a great rate of speed. The snow was whirling in front of my face, suffocating me so that I could hardly get my breath at times. Judging by the time we had been on our way, I figured we ought now to be close to the coast, but I knew that unless I hit Allen Creek and Topkok cabin I should run a chance of falling over the cliffs which ran in succession along the shore.

We were racing southward at a breakneck speed when suddenly there came a lull between puffs of wind and I saw that I was close to some high, steep place, and as I peered ahead I could see way down below the ice hummocks of the Bering Sea. Suggen was close to the edge of the precipice. I jammed both feet on the brake as we



sped downward headed for destruction, but the crust was icy and smooth and I was not able to hold the team. I brought out my emergency steel bar and rammed it into the crust through the hole in my brake made for that purpose, bringing the dogs to a standstill. By that time we were on a steep incline close to the edge of the cliff. I tried to call Suggen back to turn the team, but the wind, which was now blowing furiously again, made it hard for him to hear.

Finally Suggen responded and tried to swing the team, but the young dogs wanted to go with the wind. My first plan was to leave the dogs and sled and crawl up to safety, but it was so slippery on the crust that my Eskimo mukluks could get no hold, and the more I thought it over the less I could consider leaving my dogs to face such a tragic fate. I thought that perhaps by scrambling up the hillside I might be able to see landmarks, but as soon as I climbed a few feet the wind blew me back to the sled, and my several attempts proved utterly useless. Apparently our fate rested with Suggen. I saw the ice hummocks several hundred feet below, and I thought with horror of what would happen if the steel bar gave way. But the crust was hard and so far it still held. I pictured my sled, my dogs, and myself falling down the two-hundred-foot precipice to the rocks below. It had often happened that people had been lost here and were never heard of until the snow left in the spring, when they were found frozen and mangled on the rocks and ice hummocks.

I spoke again to Suggen, still trying to call him back to me. He did his best to respond, making several efforts

to turn, but still the young dogs refused. I kept shouting, and finally the four dogs behind him got the idea, and as Suggen turned the others followed. To my great relief I saw that little by little the whole team was turning, scrambling back up the hillside, digging their claws into the crust, headed toward safety. By some miraculous chance they were able to pull the sled and me up the incline, but I had no feeling of safety until I reached the top, for it seemed that at any moment the strong wind blowing against them might send them sliding back over the precipice. I kept shouting words of encouragement as every dog scratched and pulled, while I used my steel bar to push the sled along — and at that it was slow progress.

At last we reached the top and were out of danger. We hit the coast trail that we had missed in the storm, and drove on to Bluff. We rested for a few hours, waiting for the storm to blow over. On my arrival there I found Paul Kjegstad, who had been in several sweepstakes and who knew more about dogs than any man in Alaska. He advised me to stop until the storm was over. I took his advice, and remained there until eight o'clock. Then, although it was dark, I set forth. The temperature was twenty below and the wind was blowing in my face, but this was nothing compared to the storm we had just struggled through.

I started up over a mountain side, and when I was nearly at the top the team began to slide, and pretty soon the dogs, the sled, and I were slipping backward. It was some time before I got the dogs untangled and started again. We tried to climb in another place, with the same results. The third time we succeeded. On top of the mountains

I could see nothing but stars. I could feel my face freezing in the cold, but there was no time to dwell on that, and I drove on against the biting wind and drifting snow. I had twelve miles to go. When I got to Timber, about eleven o'clock, the other racers were all there. They had weathered the storm in fine shape. As their dogs were faster than mine, they had arrived before the worst of the blizzard struck; and they knew the trail. They had been resting all the time that I was fighting the storm.

On looking over my team I found that a number of my dogs had bleeding feet, some had torn pads, while others had lost their nails, and three had had their flanks frozen in crossing the mountains. Toward morning we all pulled out. I started first, but the others soon picked me up and passed me, leaving me far behind. At Boston I had to wait until the rest of the racers had been to Candle and come back. My dogs were all in and I had to give up the race. The betting public in Nome were furious, as some of them had bet on me and had been able to get big odds. Some of them had figured that I might be the dark horse in the race. They even went so far as to call me "yellow," and made various other unpleasant remarks, which were scarcely encouraging considering what I had been through. However, I was determined to complete a Sweepstakes race, and with this in mind I trained all the next fall, getting my dogs in condition for the race in April. I had set out the first time with dogs a year old or under, and I had planned that the next year I would start with a well-seasoned string. Fortunately during that summer I had charge of two big ditches where I had a fine chance to have my dogs with me and keep them in good condition.

## X

### ALL-ALASKA SWEEPSTAKES

IN 1915, after my experience of the previous year, I was like a child anxious to play in a game, yet somewhat shyly holding back. In a way I think I was sure of entering the Sweepstakes again, yet I could not quite make up my mind. At all events, I intended to be prepared. Hence the winter of 1914-15 found me making long trips with my team, increasing the length from day to day, beginning with short runs in November, which grew steadily longer until a short time before the date set for the race in April.

The purses for the Sweepstakes varied from sixteen hundred to ten thousand dollars, depending upon the prosperity of the moment. During the four days the race was on a holiday spirit prevailed over the entire population of Nome; courts adjourned, business houses closed their doors, and keen excitement electrified the air. Night was turned into day as news of the individual teams reached Nome and was posted on the bulletin board, where it was received by telephone from the camps, roadhouses, and small towns along the desolate trail to Candle. Between one report and the next no one knew whether his favorite might not be fighting his way through a sudden blizzard across the great bleak tundras, with the snow driving into the coats of the dogs and into the face of the driver, blinding him as he



TOGO



SUGGEN



HUSKY LEADERS



SEPPALA WITH TWO OF  
HIS SIBERIANS



pushed on. Such things as this had a great bearing on the outcome of a race, and luck and chance played a major part in determining the winner. It was easily possible that only one man might have the blizzard to fight, owing to his location on the trail at the time, while it would have blown itself out or changed its course before the next team reached that particular point. Hence a man who was considered a sure risk for first place could easily be beaten by a turn of bad luck, as well as suffer defeat on account of a poorer team or inferior handling of dogs. Before the race the sporting and betting element were busy getting "dog dope" on this team and that, and in their way they were as occupied in getting their tips as were the drivers themselves in making their preparations.

This particular winter I do not believe that anyone had any "dope" on the speed of my team, which I always drove far out of town. I drove a great deal over unbroken and unknown trails, hardening my dogs and myself to traveling under all possible conditions. I carried passengers and hauled loads of freight from one camp to another just for expenses. Toward racing time the officials of the Kennel Club came to me and asked me to enter the All-Alaska Sweepstakes once more. In fact, several people came and urged me to have another go at it — among them Scotty Allan. Scotty was to enter as usual, but it was generally thought that he would not have any close competition, as John Johnson was no longer in Alaska, and it was public opinion that no one could touch Scotty. I thought so myself. When I definitely made up my mind that I would enter I made a trip over the Sweepstakes trail in

order to acquaint myself with landmarks, etc., and to deposit my dog feed at the various stations along the trail where I planned to stop and rest.

The rations for the dogs consisted of raw Hamburger frozen into loaves, weighing from two and a half to three and a half pounds, depending upon the size of the dog, and sealed up in two-gallon coal-oil cans to avoid any chance of poisoning. I buried the cans in snowdrifts at distances advised by the experienced racer, Paul Kjegstad. He was liberal with his advice, and I found him to be right in his ideas of feeding, rest, and the distances to be covered at each stage, etc.

A few days before the start the contest to decide who was to be Queen of the Sweepstakes was held. Various girls drew votes for the honor, and the one who received the most was the undisputed Sweepstakes Queen. Votes were sold for one cent each, the proceeds going to swell the winner's prize money. The morning of the race the Queen's approach was heralded by bugles, and with her fur-clad ladies in waiting she was drawn by a gorgeous team of huskies with pomp and ceremony to the grandstand where the Kennel Club officials took up their position. The Queen carried a flag in her fur-mittened hand, and it was she who gave the signal for the departure of the teams by the dropping of the flag.

In the 1915 contest, Constance, my wife, was nominated as a candidate. We lived out on the Creeks that year, so naturally the Creek boys supported her. With the exception of Constance there was only one other favorite, a certain Mrs. Davis, who gradually took the lead among the

town candidates. It therefore simmered down to a contest between these two. Mrs. Davis was in the lead until the hour of closing. At the carnival and dance at the big Eagle Hall where the contest was held it was an exciting hour. Votes were pouring in on both sides. The Creek boys were doing their best to elect Constance, but the town sports were not idle. A telegram came from our friends in California offering two hundred dollars for votes in favor of my wife. Constance herself had a good deal of money put away to be used in the end, and five minutes before the closing of the contest, when Mrs. Davis was five thousand ahead, she and her manager began putting in their holdings. Mrs. Davis also had a reserve, so that during the eleventh hour the checkers were busy. It was five minutes of uproar and excitement as friends of both sides crowded around to put in their final vote. At the last second Constance's manager put in ten thousand votes and the contest was closed, making Constance a winner by 102,430 votes against her opponent's 75,450.

April 14 was the day set for the race. We had spent a busy week getting things in shape, looking over harnesses and lines, having a new sled built, and making sure that everything was in readiness, even to the light six-pound sleeping bag lashed to the sled. Each dog to be used in the team was photographed and the name, color, and marks of every dog registered in the Kennel Club books, to avoid any chance of substitution on the trail. The night before the race I was so nervous I could not sleep. The winter's training and preparing had come to a climax. My thoughts had been focused for months on this day, and my

excitement made me weak as the moment for the start drew closer. I felt like a loaded gun ready to go off at any second.

I felt rather out of sorts when I got up and had breakfast, but there was no time to lose, as we had to be ready to start at nine o'clock. We all had our dogs at the line, where they were jerking and pulling, anxious to be off. The signal was given for the first team to be on its way, and at one-minute intervals the others followed. Mine was the slowest starter — which did not surprise me, as I knew from the Solomon Derby in which I had competed that slow starting was characteristic of the Siberian dogs.

The big race had begun and I was on my way! I passed Fort Davis three miles out of Nome, taking my time and letting the dogs run easily. I sat down on my sled, determined not to rush them the first day, but let them have their heads. As I passed Cape Nome I caught up with one of the other teams, which had stopped at the roadhouse for a few minutes. I followed this team for a while, but it soon got away and I was once more traveling along alone. It was a glorious day, but somehow I was not feeling right. I wanted to get out and run and urge the dogs to more speed; but I had formed a definite plan of action before I started, to let the dogs have their own way the first day, figuring that it would be better to save their energy until the last two runs on the home stretch from Candle. It was all I could do to control my pent-up energy, and frequently I found myself jumping out of the sled to run along with the team; but, remembering my plan, I would get on again and ride, knowing that above all it was important that I

should keep myself fresh and alert, for I knew that if I worked myself tired in the beginning it would react on the dogs. A tired driver without snap would never do as well as one who was fresh, good-natured, and in a happy mood. If the driver radiated satisfaction with his team, the dogs sensed it, and the feeling that he was pleased made it easier for them to forget their tired limbs and make play of their work.

I made slow time from Topkok on the coast to Timber Cabin, as the trail was drifted and the snow deep. Only the tracks of the Sweepstakes team that had just passed were visible. At Timber some of the drivers had stopped for lunch. I had a bowl of soup and a sandwich, but remained only a few minutes, and as the others left I followed closely on their heels. My dogs were now picking up, and towards Council City they were doing well. We stopped a short time there, as someone handed me a bowl of soup, which I drank standing on the back of my sled.

As I stood there a man came running out bringing word that a blanket studded with porcupine quills had been found on the trail. A layer of loose snow had been sprinkled over the whole thing, so that nothing could be seen except the very tips of the quills. It would have been impossible for a driver to detect it before his dogs were on it and the quills in their feet, instantly crippling them to the extent of making further progress impossible. There was much speculation as to who had put the thing there, but no one actually knew who had done it. Some claimed it was done by members of the gambling ring in Nome to secure the winning of a certain favorite who was known



to be interested in the bookmaking at the Board of Trade.

Up till this time Scotty Allan had been the hero of the town, while the miners placed their money on the boys from the Creeks who happened to be in the race. John Johnson, the "Iron Finn," was popular with them, as he had twice won the Sweepstakes and brought them good money; but this year John had left with his team for California. The entry from Council was driven by an Eskimo boy who bore the name of Murphy. Paul Kjegstad, another entry, was a miner from Bluff, who, as I have said before, knew more about dogs than all the rest of us put together. Alek Holmsen was driving a team belonging to a doctor in town. His dogs were also Siberians, and a good-looking string, but fairly old. Scotty, as usual, was driving mongrels. The Council team was half-breed shepherd and lap dogs. Paul's were hounds and Malemute breeds.

As I had dropped out of the race the year before, I was not considered a very good bet. But the odds were high, so most of the miners took a chance and put their money on me just the same. After a few miles I passed Alek Holmsen. We traveled together to Boston, where Scotty had already arrived and was resting. Alek stopped there, but I drove on to Fish River, where I had a camp and a helper jointly with Paul Kjegstad. I got in a few minutes before Paul, and I was delighted to see that he came in in good shape after the drive of one hundred and ten miles. My dogs were also in good condition, but as a precaution we spent our time massaging their muscles and treating their feet. During our five hours of rest we

could hear other teams driving by. At the end of that time I put my dogs on the line and started off.

Six miles up on Telephone Creek I overtook Alek. He was in trouble, with his team tangled up on the slippery glacier, and as I passed he asked me to help him. I carried my sharp-pointed bar made of three-quarter-inch pipe with a steel point, which had so often helped me to hold and anchor the sled. I rammed it through my brake into the ice and went over to lend Alek a hand. He had slid down the glacier and was tangled up in a bunch of willows, while his dogs had got the scent of reindeer and were unmanageable. After I got him straightened out I went on ahead. Alek followed, but I soon left him and was alone again.

On top of the Telephone Divide my dogs scented reindeer and I had one of the fastest rides of my life, more than once nearly smashing my sled as the dogs galloped over some rough cliffs. In one place we dropped ten feet over a precipice and landed in a snowdrift all tangled up, and I lost valuable time getting under way again. Across Death Valley we had fine weather. At camp, over one hundred and forty miles out, I found Scotty having a bite to eat in the little shelter cabin. Someone invited me to have a bowl of soup, which I did, and then struck out again. They urged me to stop longer, but I jokingly said I was out to beat the Scotchman and that I was starting at once. Scotty smiled back at me enigmatically. He and I both knew I was up against a tough job.

The weather still held as I went on ahead breaking trail. I do not know how long it was after I left before Scotty

started, but I did not see anything of him until I was on top of the Gold Run Divide. I could see a team way back worming its way over the crooked trail, looking like a big reptile in the distance. I stopped at Gold Run Cabin for a few minutes, and then went on to make the thirty miles ahead of me to the turning point at Candle.

My plan was not to stop at Candle, but to go back to Gold Run, where I had left my dog feed. On arriving at Candle I found that all records from Nome to the turning point had been broken. While the judges were checking up my dogs, one of them, a particularly high-strung Siberian, somehow got loose, and as the rules read that all dogs had to be brought back, dead or alive, I had to catch her. The crowd had formed in a ring around the team, giving her no loophole of escape, but none of them could get their hands on her. Nor could I for some time, but at last when she was close enough I made a leap for her and grabbed her by the harness. She was so frightened in the confusion that she caught me by the hand and bit it completely through in several places. I tied her to the line securely, and a doctor who happened to be among the spectators went to his office and brought back medicine and bandage and dressed my wounds as best he could in an emergency. I had to drive the entire trip home without the use of one hand — which, needless to say, was a drastic handicap. When I was about a mile out from Candle I met the other teams coming in. It was now dark, and nearly eleven o'clock when I arrived at Gold Run. The precious time there was spent feeding the dogs and myself and massaging tired muscles and treating fevered feet.

Sixteen dogs and one useless hand made it slow work. I rested on the rough bunk for about an hour and a half, most of the time being spent in taking care of the animals. They were in excellent condition, but I worked on them to prevent what might come upon them if they were not cared for.

Between three and four o'clock in the morning an old miner told me that he could hear a driver on the trail toward Candle, so we concluded Scotty must be coming. The miner said he had seen him pass in several races and could always hear him almost before he could see him. It seemed to be time for me to get my dogs on the line. I did so, and struck out. I had to climb the Big Divide just about a mile from the cabin, from which point I could see Scotty coming. He was about a half-mile behind. I did not urge my dogs, and they seemed to be in no hurry. I wanted Scotty to pass me, and thought it would improve my game to let my dogs appear as sleepy as possible when my rival saw them. Scotty was known for his cunning in dog races, and it was commonly believed that he won his races as much by talking the other fellow out of it as anything else. They claimed he won two races practically by making the other fellows believe his team was in wonderful shape and thus wearing down the morale of his opponents. My friends in Nome constantly told me I could win this Sweepstakes if I persisted in driving my own race.

Scotty pulled up and passed, traveling at a good clip, but I could see that one dog at least showed the effect of the two long drives; and another dog was loose and running behind. We exchanged a few words and I did my best

to convince him that I had no hopes of beating him. I asked him what chance he thought I had against the Council entry, who was not far off. He answered that his own dogs were in fine shape, but that he thought I stood a good chance of getting second place, and he said he believed I could beat the Council team. I could see he was up to his old game of trying to make me think he was sure of first place and that there was no use in my counting on anything better than coming in second. He pulled away from me up a long slope. I expected him to run the hill, but he rode up — probably to show me that his dogs were thoroughly equal to it. I did not hurry, but let him get so far ahead that I could not see him and was sure he could not see me; then I urged my dogs to a little more speed. When we got to Camp Haven, Scotty had just left, and I could see him ahead down towards Death Valley. I stayed a few minutes with the two men who were helpers for Scotty and Alek Holmsen, meantime drinking the inevitable cup of soup.

The sun was beating down, making it comfortable and warm against the hillside where the little cabin stood. It was sheltered and surrounded with timber, and while I was inside the dogs curled up and made themselves comfortable in the snow, enjoying the sunshine. Most of them were still fairly young, and when I came out ready to leave they apparently thought they were through for the day, which made it difficult to start them. Only the leader was tugging away at his line, trying to get them going. This was the only time in the four All-Alaska Sweepstakes in which I competed that I touched my whip. There was a





SEPPALA'S TEAM, WINNER OF THE ALL ALASKA  
SWEEPSTAKES, 1915



MAKING TIME

telephone in the cabin, and inside I could hear the two men talking to Nome, telling those on the other end of the wire to bet a hundred dollars each for them on Scotty. I also heard them say, "Seppala's team is all in, and he can't even get them started."

However, I got under way, and the dogs warmed up to it as they went along. Scotty was about half an hour ahead. It was a warm day, and it grew so mild that the snow melted on my sled canvas where the sun had a chance to strike it. My dogs were still traveling at a moderate speed, and they kept going. The day I crossed Fish River flats was the finest I ever spent on the Sweepstakes trail, and I soon arrived at Boston, where Scotty was resting. He had pulled in a half-hour before, so by figuring back I knew that he had not gained anything on me the last forty miles and that we had traveled exactly even. I again stopped a few minutes and waited to see what Scotty would say. I sat down at the opposite end of the table in the little cabin, and he asked me what my plan was. I told him I was going to Council, twenty-six miles further, and rest there. He told me that he planned to stay where he was a few hours, then drive straight on into Nome. He said his dogs were in fine trim and he expected to make Nome before noon the following day. At this juncture I thought I would try a little generalship of my own along slightly different lines, so I told him that my team was pretty well all in, but I had no feed here, and should therefore have to try to get to Council and feed and rest there. I figured that his getting to Nome before noon the next day was practically out of the question. I could not see how it was

possible to make the drive in that time, as it was a hundred and six miles. Scotty had driven about thirty miles more than I on this day and at this point, so I felt that I could do the twenty-six miles to Council that same day. I should thus get my rest twenty-six miles closer to Nome, and on the following day I should have eighty miles to make while Scotty had one hundred and six.

I asked Scotty if he thought I could still beat the Council City entry, who was pegging along fairly close to me. He said, "Yes, you don't have to rush to get second place. Be sure you don't drive your dogs off their feet." Once again I had a hard time starting them, and more bets on Scotty went in over the wire. His helper was out to see me off, and I got a glimpse of Scotty in the window checking up on the condition of my team. They were dragging along slowly, and to all appearances were pretty tired and not able to go many miles more; but I was banking on the Siberian traits I knew so well.

Just out of sight of the camp a rabbit appeared on the trail ahead. The dogs gave a spurt as the rabbit crossed and ran up a long slope parallel with the team. They were not tired now! They ran as if they had just started on the Sweepstakes race, and though the rabbit disappeared over the crest of the hill the dogs kept up the spurt for miles over the tundra. When we got to the foothills I found that the burst of speed had been too much for the youngest dog in my team. His name was Savage, as, contrary to the Siberian nature, he had a freakish temperament, and I had had considerable difficulty in mastering him. The summer before, when he was still a young dog, he had run

away from my kennels and was gone for months. One day he appeared outside our cabin, but as soon as he saw anyone he immediately ran away again. I threw some meat outside the door, and he came back. For several days I threw out the meat, closer and closer to the house, then finally inside the shed door. I let him come and get it repeatedly, and when I thought it was time I fastened a rope to the door and pulled it shut while he was inside. For a while I had a battle royal with him. Every time I went to get him he was so terrified he wanted to bite me, and he was as wild as a wolf. In the little shed we both sparred for a hold, and I was determined to capture him without any mechanical means. It took me over an hour, but he was finally so worn out that in a moment when he was off his guard I got one arm around his neck and the other hand on his lower jaw, holding him helpless. I slipped on a neck strap with a chain attached and let him go to the end of it. He fought for a while, but I took him out for an hour's walk, and when we came home and I turned him into the kennels he and I were the best of friends, and I had no trouble with him afterwards.

I now had to put him on the sled to save him. The poor little fellow wanted to get out and try again, so I had to tie him to the sled basket and force him to rest. We had to climb two long steep hills and then travel down Melsing Creek before we came to Council, which we reached about seven in the evening. My plans had been laid so that, barring accidents, I could always rest during the darkest hours of the night, as I figured that both dogs and driver would relax better at night than in the daytime. At every

stopping place there were men to help me care for the dogs, and we now spent the hours mostly in nursing Savage.

Soon after I got to Council I had word that Scotty had started from Boston. He had taken hardly more than four hours' rest, which pleased me, as I knew he usually took six. It was obvious that he was worried, for he always believed in a long period of rest during the Sweepstakes. Now he had one hundred and six miles to go after a four hours' stop. I was determined to stay for six hours, even if Scotty passed Council before my time was up. The betting public was wild to have me start as soon as I had fed my dogs — that is to say, the people who had put their money on me in Nome were. To all questions as to the condition of my team I replied that the dogs and I were pretty well all in, hoping what I said would be passed on to Scotty. I was secretly planning to save our strength for the final dash from Timber to Nome. If Scotty was ahead I was determined to catch him. I had not really driven my dogs hard; they had traveled more or less to suit themselves, and I knew they had plenty more speed to give me if I asked for it. The people in Nome were furious with me when they heard I was going to rest for six hours, and tried by every means in their power to force me to pull out. I told them I was not a betting man and not interested in any gambling; I was running the race for myself and to suit myself, and had no intention of changing my plans because some gambler thought he had better ideas than I how to run my race. Unfortunately there was always an element who thought the drivers were in the game, not



for themselves or for the sport of it, but for the special purpose of winning bets for somebody else.

At 10.30 I got word that Scotty had arrived. He stayed only a few minutes and drove on. I still had more than an hour to rest, and made up my mind that I would pull out an hour after Scotty had left. Accordingly I began putting my dogs on the line. I had put out three when I got word that Scotty had returned. He had said that he could not find the way through Timber, as his leader had gone wrong three miles out of Council, having mistaken some wooded tracks for the trail.

Scotty said he had discovered the mistake, but in the darkness could not find the right trail, and therefore turned back to Council. Some of the old-timers who had checked up on Scotty's dogs claimed that it was an old sweepstakes trick to drive out and get me to follow him. This would break up my rest, and when I caught up with him he would let me pass and go on my way breaking trail to the coast, and then beat me in on the last stretch. The report now came back to me that his dogs were not in the best of condition. He had only been away an hour, and his team was badly in need of rest.

As soon as I had found out that Scotty had returned I put my dogs back in the barn and rested them two hours more. Scotty did the same. His men were watching my every move, and when I pulled out they immediately aroused him, so that he hit the trail some twenty-odd minutes after me. It was still dark, but I felt confident that my leader would not make a mistake. He was a great trail dog, and in this case not only I was depending upon his

good trail sense, but another driver also, for Scotty was following me. I still had to carry the lame Savage, as he was too stiff to travel.

The night was gorgeous, not a breath of wind stirring, and except for the fact that it was dark there was no handicap of any kind. It was amusing to me to note in a recent publication that at this point and at this time two men in the Sweepstakes race were facing a terrible blizzard. It is strange that the writers of any Alaskan stories feel called upon to represent their heroes as perpetually battling the elements, making their readers believe that there is never a moderate temperature or a pleasant trip to be made on the Alaskan trail. Nowhere in the States have I ever experienced finer traveling.

At Timber I could see Scotty's team coming on. According to the official time, he was four minutes behind me at a cabin which was situated in a small clump of trees. I pulled right out on the other side and drove about a mile further on, but now saw nothing of Scotty. I took Savage out of the sled and put him in beside my other wheel dog. He seemed to be stiff and having a hard time to keep up, and it was my intention to carry him again after a try of a few hundred yards; but I noticed a little improvement as he went along, and in a mile or so he limbered up and was pulling as well as any of the rest of the dogs; so I promoted him, and kept promoting him until five miles out he had worked himself up and was traveling along beside the leader. He had had twelve hours' rest, and being young he came back wonderfully, proving himself to be the hardest-working dog in the entire team all the way into Nome.

When I got to the coast, fifty miles from Nome, I had to climb Topkok Mountain. From the high hillside I could see back two miles, but still no sign of Scotty. I wondered if in some way he had passed me. The last fifty miles were where he was known to win his races, and this was the beginning of the stretch where I had planned we should fight to a finish. The Siberians had beaten everybody and won the Sweepstakes the year before, and still once before that, and it was up to me to do my best to make them victors the third time. I alone knew that I had not yet swung the whip except in starting my dogs, when they were lazy from basking in the sunshine, and I still had its influence to use in case I needed it.

The top of Topkok Mountain was covered with a cloud, and I soon found myself in a thick fog. I could scarcely see the length of the team, and every willow loomed up like a giant sequoia. On the wind-swept summit small rocks stood out like houses. I thought I must have gone mad with fatigue, and it was difficult to assure myself of my sanity as the objects of fantastic shape and abnormal dimensions appeared before me. I closed my eyes now and then as if that would clear my vision, but I still kept seeing things all out of proportion in the dense fog. When we started downhill the dogs were going at a tremendous speed, and I had all I could do to keep the sled right side up over the rough ground. Suddenly I came out of the cloud to find the sun shining. I could see way ahead, but there was no team. I expected to see Scotty come dashing after me, emerging from the cloud down Topkok Mountain, but there was no sign of him. I arrived in

Solomon at 10.25 in the morning, but did not stop. Apparently everyone thought I was Scotty. I could still see that he was not behind me, and they told me that he had not yet passed. It was twelve miles to Safety, and there I found that Scotty was forty-five minutes behind me at Solomon. I had gained, and it looked as if I should not have to touch my whip. At Cape Nome, thirteen miles out, I found that I was an hour ahead of Scotty. After leaving Safety I ran into a snow squall, but it did not slow me down, as it was too slight to be of any account.

Some of the people from Nome who had bet on Scotty were there to welcome him, and their disappointment was plain when they discovered my identity. If no unforeseen accident or foul play occurred I should win. However, it had happened that a team had given out completely between Cape Nome and Nome, and it was rumored that John Johnson was kept from winning a sweepstakes by someone doping his dogs. A great deal of money had been bet on Johnson, and if he had won it would have broken the gambling ring, so people guessed that his team had been doped. The dogs had become drowsy and sleepy, and finally could not be aroused. There was much discussion as to how it had been done. No one ever knew, but Johnson was supposed to have said that at a certain part of the trail his dogs kept picking up what appeared to be small pieces of meat strewn along the way, and not long after his dogs began to lag. The year before Johnson had made the record with the same team, beating the time of the fourth All-Alaska Sweepstakes by over six hours.

I was on the lookout for anything of this kind which

might appear, but there was nothing. My team still kept up the same gait, and about three o'clock I passed Fort Davis, three miles from Nome, and there was no team in sight. At the Fort the cannon began booming to announce the arrival of the winner. Tired as I was, it gave me a thrill which made me forget my fatigue to hear the cannon, and the whistles in Nome from the power plant and the fire stations shrieking forth their blare of welcome. Great numbers of people were strung along the trail to see the finish, and they shouted their encouragement and approval as I went by. Somehow, I was no longer tired, only glad it was over. My wife, the Sweepstakes Queen, was the first to greet me, and the crowd went wild with excitement, as always happened when the winner arrived. I was torn from the runners, lifted to the shoulders of the enthusiastic mob, and carried to a little sled drawn by fur-clad young people. Cameras were clicking all around, and, as I was wet with perspiration from excitement and some hard work at the end of the trail, the general delay set my teeth chattering. When the confusion subsided a little they hauled me to the bathhouse, but I was still terribly cold, and it seemed impossible to get my blood circulating again.

Someone brought me a cup of whiskey, and, scarcely knowing what I was doing, I drained every drop of it. I was given a bath and rub-down, and told those who were looking after my welfare that I would be with them to dance that evening at the celebration given by the Kennel Club. I began to get so drowsy I could hardly keep my eyes open, and stopped only long enough to go down to the finish line and greet Scotty. I then returned to my



cabin, where with the combination of the whiskey and my general weariness I fell asleep, and it was late on the afternoon of the next day when I again saw daylight.

So ended the Eighth All-Alaska Sweepstakes — my first big victory. Scotty won second place, while the Council entry came in third. Kjegstad, my adviser, and the one to whom a great deal of credit was due that I was able to win, had some mishap and did not get into the money. I was proud of two facts. One was that the race had been won without the use of the whip except that I once cracked it beside the dogs to start them off, never touching a dog with it. The other was that I had arrived at the finish with every dog in harness and in good condition. Once more the little Siberians had proved their superiority over the other dogs, and I was proud to have been their driver and to have brought them in in such good condition.

My chief pride in winning the All-Alaska Sweepstakes race three years in succession was not in the purse or in defeating my rivals, but in the fact that in each successive race all the dogs arrived in harness and in as good condition as they did in 1915. As in all contests, the more popular these races became, and the more manifest the interest they aroused, the more each driver fought to claim one improvement after another which was supposed to have assisted the winner. Though other people have claimed to have invented the double hitch that is now being used all over Alaska, Canada, and the States, it should be attributed to Paul Kjegstad. My brother and a friend of his made the first racing sled with extension runners behind with a place for the driver to stand, but it was copied by another

driver who took their idea and made a sled on similar lines and later claimed to have built the first one of that type.

Also I have read wonderful tales about dogs and leaders who became famous through the newspapers and magazines, which would pick some dog as their hero and tell colorful and greatly exaggerated stories of his prowess; but there were many real dogs who were known throughout Alaska, and whose achievements counted in the lives of the men who drove them, but who were never known to the public. Probably one of the greatest leaders who ever raced in the Sweepstakes was John Johnson's Kolma, a black Siberian with white eyes, who had more speed and endurance than any dog at that time. On a level with Kolma was my leader, Togo. The distance he covered was greater, as far as I have ever been able to find out, than that covered by any other individual dog, and I can safely say that he has won more races than any dog in Alaska.

## XI

### RUBY RACE

I STARTED the following summer as usual, spending April and May hauling supplies and overseeing the opening of the ditches. All summer I used my dogs as motive power on the Kougarok railroad which ran parallel with the ditch. During the winter of 1916 the Nome Kennel Club received a challenge from the Ruby Kennel Club, and as no one else ventured to go I decided to try it. I started off with sixteen dogs, and thought that if they looked promising I would keep on to Ruby. Whether or not the Nome Kennel Club stood behind me I do not know. I believe some of them thought that my winning the Sweepstakes was an accident. But whether I had their support or not was of little concern to me, so I started on my way for Ruby. When I reached the Yukon, all along the way I knew that people were keeping close check on my time between the different villages, as there was a telephone line strung from the coast to Fairbanks. I saw to it that no one found out how fast my team could travel when necessary. At every place I stopped overnight I was told stories about the racing teams on the river, and try as I would I could never equal their time between stations. One day I had just passed a station and rounded a point in a sharp curve on the river, making about nine miles an hour, when I felt

something touch my back. I could not imagine what it could be. I had thought myself utterly alone on the mighty Yukon. I had not seen anyone in any direction. I looked back, and saw a young Indian trotting along right at my heels, carrying a six-foot crosscut saw. It was the end of the saw that had hit me as it swayed back and forth. I was appalled at the speed the man was making. He kept up with my team as easily as a rabbit. I invited him to ride, and he did so for a half-mile or so. He said he had seen me pass and thought I must be the Nome team, so he had decided to run out and see my outfit and find out whether it would be safe to bet on me. I told him it was certainly no use to do so, as I could now see that the Indians did not need a dog team in order to keep up with me, and I decided that the stories I had believed impossible about the speed of the Yukon teams must be true. He allowed at last that he thought I should win, and decided to bet on me, and before I could remonstrate with him he jumped off and started back, the big saw dangling and swaying as he ran. That night I stopped with Johnnie Antaskis, an Indian who kept a sort of roadhouse. Later on two more teams arrived. Johnnie loved nothing better than to play a fiddle, and that evening some of his Indian friends dropped in for a little entertainment, which ended in their spending most of the night dancing. Johnnie never stopped his fiddling, and those of us who would have enjoyed a good night's sleep were doomed to disappointment. The music was not from the classics, and Johnnie's execution was far from perfect. When we who were trying to sleep would ask them to be more quiet, Johnnie would

calmly answer back, " You no like um; I play a new one." So it went on throughout the night.

The next day it was fifty below, with a strong wind blowing down the Yukon. Ben Derrick's cabin at Whiskey Creek was a welcome sight, and Ben was a good story-teller, so I anticipated an amusing evening, and a peaceful one, without the accompaniment of Johnnie's incessant fiddling. The last day's traveling brought me to Ruby. I had arrived several days ahead of the race, so that I could drive around the country acquainting myself with the course and still have time to rest my dogs after the trip of eleven days from Nome. Every time I drove out my time was closely checked, and I therefore took things easy, never rushing the dogs. I was told that the course lay over three high hills and that the Indian drivers ran like deer up the mountains on foot ahead of their teams. This did not sound very encouraging. Being the stranger team, I was continually checked, and every move I made was watched and reported along the line as I made my trial drives. When the morning of the race arrived my dogs were in fine feather. At the turning point I found myself even with the fastest team of the Yukon drivers, and I felt reasonably sure that the Siberians would pull me back on the home stretch in far better time. For a while I let the fast teams keep just ahead, and then I gradually gained on them, passing them one by one. I wanted to have a little fun, so I sat down in my sled, lit a big cigar, leaned back comfortably, and smoked away as if I were out for a pleasure jaunt. But what the men behind me did not know was that I was driving hard just the same, urging my dogs to greater effort as I sat there. I soon left the others behind, and suc-





PLACE WINNERS IN THE RUBY DERBY, 1916  
LEFT TO RIGHT, CHARLIE FRISCO (2nd), GEORGE JIMIE (3rd),  
AND LEONHARD SEPPALA (1st)

ceeded in winning the race by fourteen minutes, thus establishing a new record.

I was pleased because it was one more scalp for the belt of the Siberian dogs. I was vastly amused when I overheard a conversation after the race in Ruby. It appeared that some of the betting ring were trying to find out how it happened that my Siberians had won and why the favorites of Ruby had let me get away from them. I heard the driver reply: "There was n't a chance to hang on to him. He just sat in his sled smoking a cigar while his dogs walked away from us as fresh as though they had just started." I was secretly pleased that my ruse had worked and that I had been able to give the very impression I had hoped to create. Later the same evening I dropped into a saloon with the other dog drivers. As I was standing there someone grabbed me by the shoulder and turned me around until we were face to face. I saw a small man about my own size. He looked me over from head to foot, then nodded his head up and down, saying to me: "So that is all there is to you — and still you got away with my twelve hundred dollars with those little plume-tail rats of yours! Well, it is all right with me. I have only ten dollars left, and you may as well have that too. So as far as the ten dollars goes let 's have drinks for the house. I am a small man myself, but always admired big men and big dogs, and it has cost me twelve hundred dollars to learn that it is not always size that wins."

There was also in Ruby a Chinaman who ran the bath-house and laundry and who had made a lot of money both in his trade and as a gambler. He was notoriously shrewd. He had taken a position on the roof of a house

where he had a good chance to view the course at the start. He watched every team get under way, and as mine seemed to be the slowest of all when we passed out of sight he went down and bet eight hundred dollars that the Nome team would not win. After the race he spoke to a friend of mine and said: "Sibelians pletty foxy dogs — go out like flozen louses, come back like sklared jack labbits."

The evening in general was given over to a celebration in old frontier style. None of us slept. Two Indians, one who got second and one who got third place, had a big potlatch in which they insisted that I should participate before taking part in the white man's celebration.

I started back home the next morning at ten o'clock, carrying with me as a passenger an old friend of mine. There were many teams going down the river to their homes now that the big winter celebration was over. About eight miles down the Yukon we overtook a lone Indian woman on foot. We persuaded her to ride in our sled, and asked her where her husband and team had disappeared to. She said her husband — who, by the way, was deaf and dumb — had put her out of the sled because he was not able to keep up with the other Indian teams while he carried her. He had just left her to get on as best she could. I now drove as fast as possible, determined to catch the Indian, and in a few miles we came up with him. We motioned him to stop, and my passenger carried the woman over to his sled, shaking his fist at him and indicating that he was not to repeat his trick of leaving his wife to walk thirty-five miles merely that he might keep up with the other teams.

## XII

### NINTH ALL-ALASKA SWEEPSTAKES AND OTHER STORIES

THE Ninth All-Alaska Sweepstakes was close at hand, and there were five of us ready to pull out at the starting line on April 13, 1916. Last year I had won, but most people thought it was luck, and they had almost succeeded in making me believe it myself. This year Delzene was the favorite, and there was good reason for it. Next to John Johnson he had made the best time over the Sweepstakes trail, and had won over both Johnson and Scotty Allan in 1913. Apparently he had very good dogs; and he was an excellent driver. In 1914 and 1915 he had not entered his team, as they were not in good shape, but other drivers had had some of his best dogs in those two races. In 1913 he had won with ease and had come in with all dogs in harness and in good shape. They were in better condition than any team of mongrel dogs, and made the best time of any of them. Hence he had to be considered the hardest to beat of all drivers of mongrels.

There was also Fred Ayer, with his whirlwind foxhounds that were an unknown quantity in the big races but had won everything in shorter distances. There was also Bobby Brown, with his young wire-haired staghounds. They had the reputation of having hauled greater loads than

any dog team on the Peninsula, and while on a training trip I had traveled a number of miles in company with Bobby and had found it difficult to keep up with him. Bobby himself was an all-round athlete and a man in his best years. Last but not least was Paul Kjegstad, the giant Norwegian. Paul was the squarest sport I ever raced against, but he weighed eighty pounds more than I, which would in itself be bound to tell on the team in that four-hundred-and-eight-mile grind. Sizing up everything, it appeared that I had a harder fight on my hands than last year, as Delzene had shown that he was superior to Scotty by the ease with which he had defeated him the last time they had battled against each other.

The first day of the race was uneventful. Fred Ayer held the lead, but I was told that he had a dog in the sled at Council. A few miles out of Council I caught Bobby, and as I passed I saw that he had one lame dog. Fred and Delzene arrived at Boston ahead of me, and I drove on six miles to Fish River, where I stopped to feed my dogs and rest for six hours. There I had two men help me care for the dogs, cook my own food, etc. I was on my way at about four o'clock the next morning, and on the Telephone Creek Divide I was soon overtaken by Fred Ayer and Delzene as they traveled along together. They stopped longer than I did at Camp Haven, a hundred and forty miles from Nome, so I passed on. It was rather cold, making my steel shoeing on the sled pull hard on the gritty snow.

At Gold Run, Ayer and Delzene caught me again, although they had stopped about a half-hour longer than I at Camp Haven. I could see that they were traveling



faster, so while they were in the cabin having lunch I took my sled behind an old tent and with the help of an Eskimo unscrewed my steel shoeing, took it off, coiled it up, and put it under my sled canvas. Then I started off again, with twenty-nine miles to go to the turning point. It was blowing hard all the way, so I could not see far around me, and had a hard time to keep my bearings; but my sled was pulling easier now, and I arrived in Candle fifty-four minutes ahead of Fred Ayer, my closest competitor. Because of the blizzard, I decided to stay over and rest at Candle instead of going back to Gold Run as I had planned. I remained there over eleven hours. Bobby left Candle before me, but I caught up with him at Gold Run. His dogs were in bad shape — two entirely out. He was a miner and a comparatively poor man, but a good sport. To participate in the big race cost a lot of money in preparation, and I felt sorry for him, for as far as I could see there was no possible chance of his getting back any of the money he had put in. He asked me what I thought of his dogs and his chances. I answered him honestly that I thought he would not get into the money, and that it seemed to me it would be cruel to try to drive those dogs through. But of course I told him it was up to him. He agreed, saying: "My dogs are good, but too young. Next year I will be in and give you all a chase." So Bobby dropped out of the race. But Bobby's last race with himself as driver ended right there. Little did either of us know that the next winter we were to enter a contest, partly over the same trail, that would be a race with death.

I saw nothing of the other drivers when I left Gold Run,

but they were somewhere close on my heels and I expected to see them behind me any minute. I passed Camp Haven and Boston, but still no teams. I arrived at Council at about eleven o'clock that night, and though it was pitch dark the weather was good, and my dogs were going well. I had made the last nineteen miles from Boston to Council in one hour and twenty-four minutes.

Around seven the next morning I was again on the way. I passed Timber cabin, and still there was no one in sight. I arrived at Solomon at 1.25 and at Safety at 3.13. At Cape Nome, fourteen miles from the finish, I found that I had gained on Delzene, now my nearest rival. It looked hopeful for me then. I had not used my whip the whole trip; indeed, I had hardly urged my dogs. If I were pressed I could drive much harder and improve my speed. But it was never necessary. At 5.38 in the evening I crossed the tape with all my dogs in harness and more than one and a half hours ahead of the nearest man. It had been a more or less stormy trip, with a good many unbroken trails in places, making our time much slower than that of the previous year.

Again there followed a summer of mining and building ditches, this time in the Grand Central River Valley, one of the wildest and most barren parts of the country in Alaska. The dog team was continually used for travel and for hauling supplies to the construction camp by way of the Kougarok railroad, at that time unfit for locomotives or steam or gas vehicles. The next winter I was out on the trail with my dogs as usual. Again Stevenson and I made a trip to Koyuk River and Dime Creek. When we pulled

into Dime Creek from Isaac's Point we had completed a drive of forty miles for the day, and I was just unhooking the dogs when a man came running down to the team from up the trail. He was covered with blood, and when he came close enough I could see that he was terribly disturbed over something. When he got his breath sufficiently to speak he told me that poor Bobby Brown had been cut and broken up in his sawmill and now lay in a terribly mangled condition. He said, "It is up to you to take him to the hospital in Candle immediately."

Candle was sixty-two miles away, and it was after one o'clock. I had already traveled forty miles, and though I was perfectly willing and only too glad to take Bobby I felt that there must be some fresher team than mine at the camp which could make better time than my dogs could in their present tired state. Furthermore, I had never been over the trail to Candle in this direction and was not familiar with it. I thought it better that they should pick one of their local dog men who knew the trail, but he would not listen to me.

"We heard by telephone that you would be here, and we have decided you are the only man to take Bobby to Candle. You have the best team in the country. So go ahead and put the dogs back on the line, and we will drive the four miles up to the sawmill, where Bobby is being taken care of by the only trained nurse we have. Then we will get together the best team of dogs in town and the best man we have to drive it to go along with you, in case anything should happen, — your sled break, or any unforeseen accident, — and as he knows the trail he can go ahead and

prevent your getting lost. And to speed you up he can carry your passenger while you just take Bobby on your sled."

As long as he had this confidence in my dogs and me, I was more than glad to undertake the errand. We drove over to the sawmill, where I found my old comrade and Sweepstakes rival in terrible shape. He had one leg sawed off and just hanging by a piece of muscle, and the other leg and an arm broken and several ribs crushed. Poor Bobby! No more sweepstakes for him. But with all his ghastly injuries he was still cheerful. I had a bite to eat and a cup of coffee while they pulled my sled into the log cabin. His legs were boxed up in wooden trough-like splints, a wolf robe and blankets were wrapped around him, and he was placed in my sled, lying flat on his back. They made him as comfortable as possible. Then they took the sled out and I hooked the dogs on. In the meantime the other team pulled into camp and my passenger was transferred to his sled. I told them to start off and lead the way.

When everything was ready I gave the word to the leader and sixteen dogs jumped into their collars as one. They were the best team I ever owned, and fortunately their muscles were as hard as steel. Word of the accident had spread along the creeks, and every man and woman, Eskimo and white, had gathered, so there was a big crowd to send Bobby off on what proved to be his last ride. Never was anything in my life, I think, as gratifying to me as the confidence that those rugged men and women placed in my team and myself. With tears in their eyes they stood

in silence while I looked over my lines and harness, replacing by new straps those that seemed worn, and making sure that everything was secure. As I pulled out I heard a sigh of relief from the crowd, but there was no other sound — it was deadly still. Their only demonstration was the waving of their hands as we went off. I treasured the trust they had placed in me and I was out to do my best to bring Bobby to Candle in the shortest possible time.

By now it was fairly late in the afternoon, and about thirty below, with the wind westerly and blowing hard in our faces. Four miles out I caught up with the other team, and it was evident that the driver could not keep out of the way, so I drove on past him. He followed for a while, but soon began to lag behind. His dogs were a handsome string of Malemutes, but not fast enough to keep up. The driver was a good-looking young giant of a Swede, strong and powerful. Surely the people of Dime Creek had sent the best they had.

Four miles more and the following team was left far behind. I waited for them and took Stevenson back on with me. He stood on one runner and I on the other. But even when relieved of Stevenson's weight the other team could not keep up, so I told the Swede that it was no use his going on, as we should only lose time. It was a case of taking our chances and trusting to luck that we should find the way.

Bobby kept up his spirits beyond our greatest expectations. He told us to tell him the landmarks as we traveled, and when we did so he was able to direct us, even in his mangled condition. Only now and then he would groan,



and when the team spurted and the sled slipped across the windrows of snow, bouncing a little from one to the other, he would say: "Boys, don't drive quite so fast. But don't worry about me — I'll get along all right." I never saw such an admirable exhibition of grit, patience, and iron will to keep up courage.

We were afraid that he might start bleeding or that in the dark we should go over some steep cut-bank or precipice and upset our sled. If we should be unfortunate enough to turn over, he would literally fall to pieces, and probably bleed to death before we could do anything for him. In the intense cold and the flying snow which was now thick around us, if his bandages had come loose he would have frozen before we could have readjusted them.

About twenty-three miles from Candle we met Bobby's own team, driven by an Eskimo. He had a lot of dog salmon and provisions. I told him to dump his load and take Stevenson on his sled and follow us into Candle. He did so, and in a few moments we went on. His team was strong, but it had been doing heavy freighting, so that he traveled slowly, and after a few miles he was out of sight. I again had to wait and take Stevenson back on my sled, in case of emergency. It was now very dark, and the storm increased to a blizzard, but the last twenty miles was on the Sweepstakes trail, and although I could not myself see the way I had the utmost faith in my leader, who had also been over the trail before.

My greatest worry was the chance of running across a reindeer herd. If we did it would make the dogs wild, and no matter how tired they were they would spurt over the

loose drifted snow, perhaps leaving the trail, and run us over some rough place that would upset our human burden on the snow. On we drove, hoping to get through the storm and darkness without accident. At about eleven o'clock that night we saw the lights of Candle, and I can never express the relief I felt. We landed Bobby in as good condition as was possible with the dog team. The hospital was up on a hillside, and I stopped the team outside of a roadhouse while Stevenson ran in and told the men to come out and help pull the sled up to the hospital by hand. A dozen men rushed out and grabbed the sleigh, and in a few minutes Bobby was under the doctor's care. His wife and children arrived two days later. On the third day he appointed a friend of mine to take care of his business, calmly asked that the window be opened, and then went to sleep quietly and never woke up.

I was certainly proud of my dogs. They had made one hundred and two miles that day with sometimes two and sometimes three men on the sled. I have not heard of any dog team making as long a drive as that with such a load in one day and in one drive.

Sometime after my trip to Candle with Bobby, Mrs. Esther Birdsall Darling presented me with a poem she had written about the drive, and I treasure it as one of my greatest possessions.

#### SEPPALA DRIVES TO WIN!

There 's a race on the Trail into Candle  
With a Nome Sweepstakes team in the game —  
Hear the rhythm and beat of the fast-flying feet  
Of the dogs that have earned them a name!

But this contest is not for a record,  
Neither cup nor a purse is the goal;  
For Seppala, intent, on one mission is bent —  
Of racing with Death for a Soul.

Some victories may fade and grow dimmer,  
Some laurels no longer stay green;  
But his undying race is the heartbreaking pace  
Neck and neck with an entry unseen.  
For at Dime there was crushed, in a moment,  
Bobby Brown, well beloved far and wide;  
Whose life ebbing fast strikes the driver aghast,  
As he faces his harrowing ride.

There 's the broken and pain-tortured body  
Lying heavy on Stevenson's lap;  
There are unuttered fears, and his friends' bitter tears,  
As they fasten each buckle and strap.  
Then, the swift-spoken word to the leader,  
While as swiftly he answers the same:  
"There 's a race to be run, and a stake to be won —  
Come, Togo, live up to your name!"

After weary miles stretching to Candle,  
There is skill and a hope for the best.  
"Give all of your speed, taking never a heed  
Of hunger and thirst, nor of rest."  
They are dashing o'er limitless tundra,  
Over depths where the ice menace lies;  
And the glare of the sun, on that nerve-racking run,  
Is a flame to their half-blinded eyes.

There 's the sting and the rage of the blizzard,  
As the Arctic unleashes its gale;  
There 's the night falling gray at the end of the day,  
And there 's Death riding hard on their Trail.

Man's pluck, and the strength of a dog-team —

"On, Togo! We trust to your pace."

There's the flash of a light — then there's Candle in sight —  
And Seppala beats Death in the Race!

ESTHER BIRDSALL DARLING

It was in October of the following fall, that we were putting in a new intake on the great Miocene Ditch, the biggest ditch in Alaska. We were about forty miles from Nome at the time, when one morning as we were having breakfast the telephone rang and I happened to answer. Stevenson, the manager of our company, was on the other end of the line, and I knew from his voice that something was wrong.

"I have some bad news for you, so be ready to buck up and take it. Sigurd was burned to death in his cabin this morning."

Sigurd was my brother. It seemed that when his partner got up that morning to light the fire he used a small can of gasoline, which when it exploded ignited a five-gallon can standing in the corner, and the whole cabin was a mass of flames in an instant. Sigurd's partner got out and rolled around on the ice, breaking through where there was a little water to wet his clothing; but Sigurd never got out, probably being overcome with the flames and smoke. His partner had heard him shout, "Where are you?" and that was all. They found his charred body after the fire was out.

Men rushed to the scene as soon as they saw the fire, but all the water pits were frozen, so that it was impossible to do anything. Dozens of men stood there watching but powerless to help as the flames gained headway.

I staggered out of my own cabin and fell in a little snow-drift outside. Only yesterday I had been talking to Sigurd, listening to his plans for the future. He was to have left in a few days on the last boat for the States, where he was to have been married.

The gold rush had taken its toll of one more victim, and this one was so close that it made me realize the tragedies as no other incident had ever done.



## XIII

### MISS JUDSON'S STORY

THE next winter a prominent merchant of Nome wanted to go to the States and asked me to take him by dog team to Fairbanks. I had never been in that part of Alaska and was anxious to see the country, so we eventually reached an agreement and soon were on our way. After leaving the coast at Unalakleet we ran into very cold weather on the Kaltag Divide, and all the way up the Yukon it varied from four to sixty below. But the trails were good for five hundred miles to Ruby Hot Springs. Then it began to snow and blow down the Yukon; but the temperature was still the same. The trip was uneventful, though cold, and we made Fairbanks in thirteen and a half days, which is another record that still stands and will stand for some time to come.

My passenger weighed about two hundred pounds, and in addition we carried two hundred pounds of baggage besides our dog feed. I stayed sixteen days at Fairbanks, waiting for a man from the States who was to be my passenger down the Yukon. While there I met a friend of mine from Nome, a lawyer who was also a dog racer. He now lives in Fairbanks. One day he called upon me and told me that there was a lady from Mexico City who was traveling through Alaska for her health. He added that

she was a very interesting person and that I should enjoy meeting her. So it was arranged, and we went to see her in her suite of rooms in the leading Fairbanks hotel. The young lady was indeed very attractive, and exceedingly intelligent and interesting, as my friend had described her. But she was small, and looked very frail. We spent a delightful hour, and before I left she asked me if it would be possible for me to take her to Nome with my dog team. She said she had come to the country to see Alaska and that she would like to see it by dog.

I was astonished at her request, and scarcely knew how to answer her. However, I told her I already had a passenger. But she was not to be dissuaded, and argued that with sixteen dogs I ought certainly to be able to take two passengers. I gave no definite answer, but I was considerably disturbed at the prospect of having her with me. As my friend and I left I told him that under no circumstances would I take a woman, and certainly no such frail creature as this one, on an eight-hundred-mile trip in the dead of the Alaskan winter. I was sure she would die on my hands before we reached the Yukon, and that was only a hundred and fifty miles. He quickly replied that I might take a look at myself in the mirror, adding that I was very little bigger than the girl. He asked me why I did n't give her a chance and see if she could n't stand it, as he considered it would be the best medicine in the world for her.

During my stay in Fairbanks, Miss Judson, the girl from Mexico City, spoke to me continually about going along, and I kept refusing, but she was so persistent that at last I decided I should have to take her, thinking all the time

she would not go far, but would soon be tired of it and glad to go back to Fairbanks on the mail team. So when I was ready, my passenger from the States having arrived, we pulled out. It was a mild day with rain, and sloppy going, and we were soaked to the skin at the end of our first forty-mile drive. I was certainly sorry for my frail passenger. I split my team in two, a fur buyer driving the other half and taking the Deputy Marshal for a passenger. I am ashamed to say that I was disgusted at having a lady passenger, and treated her as if she had been a rough sourdough, hoping she would soon tire of the ways of the trail and take the mail team back. She seemed to be able to stand very little cold, as I had anticipated. I put her in my sleeping bag and kept her there as much as possible; then I would take her out and put her back on the runners, showing her how to handle the sled. But she would only last for twenty minutes or so at a time; then I had to tuck her back in again. We came to Tanana Hot Springs on the third day, having heavy going and putting in long days on the trail. At Hot Springs there was a good roadhouse, known for its excellent food. I noticed my passenger was very undecided as to what she would have to eat, so in order to make her good and sick of me and of the trip I said: "Young lady, you don't get anything to eat until you are hungry enough to take anything that comes along. I will just ask you to leave the table, as you can't seem to find anything here that suits you." ° And then to the roadhouse man I said: "I am looking after the welfare of this lady, and she need not have any more to eat." She gave me a

questioning look, and I believe she hated me for what I had done. However, she left the table and went upstairs to bed.

During the night the temperature fell to forty below. In the morning I knocked on her door at five o'clock, saying as I did so that her breakfast was ready and that I would have the dogs harnessed in an hour. Through the thin paneling I could hear her muttering half-suppressed exclamations about the rude and uncultivated manners of the Alaskan dog drivers. But she got up, hurried through her breakfast, and slipped into her parka and mukluks.

When I drove the dogs up to the house she was ready. It was dark and cold, with a biting breeze blowing down the Tanana River. Forty below with a strong wind was cold enough for anyone. I was surprised to see her ready to start, but I was sure that this day would finish her. We drove fifty-five miles over heavy trails, spending fourteen hours on the way. We stopped only once for about fifteen minutes, for a cup of coffee. We could have camped sooner than we did, but I deliberately tried to scare the girl into going back. I felt sure she would not tackle another day. At Fort Gibbon, the junction of the Tanana and the Yukon, we stopped at a roadhouse. Here we met the lawyer who had persuaded me to take Miss Judson. He was there on official business with his dog team from Fairbanks, and I pleaded with him to take her back or at least to advise her to return with some other team. He refused, saying he would do no such thing—that it was for her to decide. I was willing to wager all I had that she would not be on my sled at six o'clock the next morning after that fourteen-

hour grind. He apparently knew the young lady better than I did, and took me up on my wager. The previous day my sled had slewed up against a tree and Miss Judson's arm was caught and badly twisted between the sled and the tree. I thought for certain it was broken, but she never whimpered. I am sure that arm was all the colors of the rainbow, if nothing worse!

At six o'clock I had my sled lashed, when the roadhouse man brought down her grips. I was certainly disgusted when I found that after all she was going along with me. Well, there was nothing to do but take her as far as Ruby, one hundred and thirty miles down the Yukon. Just as we pulled out the lawyer came to claim his wager, which I admit I paid him grudgingly. That morning it was about five below, but the trail was heavy. It got warmer with the approach of daylight at eight o'clock, and at noon it turned into a heavy rainstorm, which softened up the snow so that my sled settled into it, and the slush stuck between the runners and to everything else. We now were traveling very slowly, only making about two miles an hour, when I finally discovered a cabin on the bank of the Yukon, a half-mile away. We headed for it and made camp. The cabin had not been occupied for years, and the sodding on the roof had worn or blown off and the rain was pouring in everywhere. There was not a place to be found where it was not dripping. Out of our sled canvas I rigged up an emergency inside roof, but it was not rain-proof. I found an old piece of mining hose, which I ripped up and used to run the water out of Miss Judson's corner of the cabin, and with the help of an old washtub which I placed



beside her sleeping bag I succeeded in keeping some of the water out of her bunk. This bunk was a rough affair of round spruce boards, with nothing on them but the thickness of her sleeping bag.

During the night it turned bitterly cold. Everything inside and outside the cabin froze solid. The canvas became like iron plate, the sleeping bag was stiff, and the cabin was so open that no amount of firing in our little Yukon stove seemed to give any heat. We had a hurried breakfast and started off. The poor dogs with their fur frozen were miserable until we got them warmed up from traveling. Still my companion did not complain. I began to admire the grit of this girl who weighed only ninety-eight pounds and was a semi-invalid. To me it was a queer way to look for health. We did not stop for lunch, as I could see her appetite was not any too good even with only two meals a day. But it was not long before I could actually see an improvement. After twelve hours on the trail with no food, she no longer wondered if she would eat this or that, but seemed to enjoy everything that came on the table.

About ten days after our departure from Fairbanks we arrived at Kaltag, and our fur-buyer friend parted from us. He bought some dogs and borrowed some of mine and kept on down the Yukon, buying furs. We made the usual short cut to the coast over the Kaltag Divide. As we did not have the best of trails, it took three days to go over. My passenger now began to show a remarkable improvement in strength and health. At the start of the journey she could stand only fifteen or twenty minutes

at the back of the sled, but every day I increased her time at work, and when we arrived at Unalakleet she was spending two hours at a stretch driving and handling the sled. I began to admire her grit more and more, and I was ashamed of my rough ways at the beginning of the trip. She developed into one of the best trail companions I have ever had — always cheerful and contented, no matter how tough the trail or rough the storms.

Finally we arrived at Dime Creek, and the second day after we were there I left for a reindeer camp fifty miles inland north of Dime Creek. The first day we were there everybody was very anxious to know the news from the outside world, and also who the woman might be that I was carrying as a passenger. I told them all the news I had the first evening at the store, which was packed with miners. Then some of them wanted to know about my lady companion. I told them, quite truthfully, that I did not know anything about her. Someone suggested she might be a writer of magazine stories or was collecting material for a book. I said it was possible, but that I had my suspicions that she belonged to the Secret Service, as I had seen a card drop out of her pocket which had marks on it indicating something of that sort. One old miner stirred around in his chair and laid a wager that she was the one he had heard of who was traveling through Alaska investigating all the Government and Federal offices. He winked his eye at me and nodded his head toward the United States Commissioner, who seemed to be growing uneasy at the possibility of having his office checked up. He was an old miner, and not much at home among law

books and legal documents. He used to be a member of the miners' meetings of years past, when they made their own laws and enforced them, but these newfangled courts, with lawyers using language that a miner had a hard time to understand, and laws that could be twisted any old way, were too much for this old-timer, who could see only two sides to every case, the right and the wrong, and he needed no law books to decide for him. It was either right or wrong at a glance. They asked me all kinds of questions about my passenger. Enjoying the situation immensely, I told them about an incident at Old Woman Cabin on the Kaltag Divide.

"We had just pulled in. I had gone for wood and water, and she had made the fire and started the coffeepot. She was outside throwing the fish to the dogs when I stepped into the cabin with the sleeping bags. Her jacket was lying on the bunk, and as I moved it to put the bag in the bunk I saw the handle of a revolver sticking out of the pocket. When I went out I asked her what she used that thing for, saying this was not Mexico and she would n't need any guns here. She said, 'I have n't any gun.' I said, 'Then what do you call that thing sticking out of your coat pocket?' She then smiled and said, 'As you found my gun, I'll show you what I can do with it.' She went in, and soon came out with the gun in her small hand. Pointing to an empty can, she said, 'Suppose you take two of them and throw both of them up about twenty feet in the air at the same time.' I did so, all the while making game of her bluff of shooting. When the cans were in the air three shots rang out, and when they came down and I

picked them up to examine them I found two holes in one can and one in the other. All I can say is I am glad she did n't choose me for her target."

When I finished my story everybody was more convinced than ever that my innocent passenger was a Secret Service agent. The old Commissioner disappeared, and the boys said he had gone home to straighten up his office for the first time in years!

I left Miss Judson at Dime while I went to the reindeer herds. She wanted to go with me, but I had never been in that part of the country, and thought I should possibly have to spend several days hunting for the camp, and perhaps not finding it at all. Then, too, there was always a chance of getting lost if a blizzard should blow up in a country strange to me. I found the herds and the camp the second day out, bought fifteen hundred deer, as I had been commissioned to do, and returned to Dime several days later.

We spent one night at an Eskimo village, and while we were there a native man came to our igloo and asked us if we could help his sick baby. I had no idea what to do, but Miss Judson offered her help. She went with him to his igloo, and found that the child had pneumonia combined with spinal meningitis. She looked after the child all night, and told the family how to care for it after she had gone. The next morning we started early as usual. Two weeks later, when we came by there again, the Eskimo thanked Miss Judson, saying: "You plenty good woman doctor. My baby now getting plenty strong. I give him your name and we long time remember you."

At Nome there was the same speculation as to who the lady might be who would make such a trip. There must be some good reason for it — but what? We remained a week in Nome, and she then contracted with me to take her back three hundred and forty miles to Nulato on the Yukon. As to who she was, I told everybody I did not know and could not find out. As a consequence all kinds of rumors were started about the identity of the lady. From Nome to Nulato we struck only one bad blow, and that we went through easily. Miss Judson now drove the team most of the time. She had gained remarkably in strength, and soon became a good dog driver. She hired an Indian to take her to Ruby Hot Springs, one hundred and thirty miles up the river, and I went on my way back to Nome. Later on that spring, one day at the end of May, I received a wire from my lawyer friend telling me that he and Miss Judson had been married that day. Still later I received a note from her thanking me for my part in bringing about her subjection to the “spell of the Yukon.”



## XIV

### SAND STORM

ON one of my trips I was carrying as a passenger a friend of mine, Tom Blake by name. We were traveling on Golovin Bay, an arm of Norton Sound. We left Isaac's Point one day in the fall. It had been slow going and a poor trail, and we had been out so long that the dogs were traveling at a slow pace. We had thirty miles to go to the first Eskimo village, and when we arrived there it was getting on in the afternoon, so I suggested that we camp for the night. It was blowing hard offshore, but there was no snow flying, and my friend, who was newly married, was impatient of any such delay. He wanted to go twenty-eight miles further to the next village, so that we could make Nome and home the next day. I did not favor the idea, because I knew that it would mean traveling half of the distance in the dark, and because part of the way was over a steep mountain, and it was rough on the other side where we had to descend.

However, I acquiesced, and we managed the mountain part of it successfully; going down, our sled rolled over a few times and we went over with it, but no one was hurt, as the dogs ran on down the steep hillside like frightened rabbits. When we got to the other side the blow had increased to a fifty-mile gale, and we had a bay seven miles

wide to cross to get to Cheenik. The ice was young and smooth, and from the top of the mountain we could see the black open water some distance out, as the water had frozen only halfway across Golovin Bay.

We intended to hug the beach, for, though it would make the trip longer, it was safer; I did not dare to cross straight over to Cheenik. The wind was so strong as we hit the ice that we could not control our movements, not having any creepers. The beach was strewn with boulders, which made it almost impossible for us to make our way. The tundra was bare and rough, so we tried to keep along the outer edge of the boulders. The beach was all sand, and the strong wind blew it out on the ice, making a regular sand storm, so that every time we opened our eyes against the wind we were blinded by the sand. It was now dark, and blowing so hard that we could hear each other only at close range. I had a rope around my waist hitched to the leader, as the dogs were as helpless on the smooth ice as we were. I kept stumbling among the boulders, while the sled with my companion on it would swing and blow out on the smooth ice; but I was anchored behind some rock and every time could pull the sled back to shore. We were making scarcely more than two miles an hour, and working hard at that. The sixteen dogs kept getting into tangles. Dark, cold, and a sand storm, with ice that the drifting sand kept polishing as smooth as glass!

Then I came to a place where there seemed to be a distance of six feet between one boulder and the next. I made a dash across the space, but the next rock was covered with a coating of ice and as I struck it I slipped and slid

back. At the same time the wind took the sled and the team, and I was dragged along. I heard my companion shout through the storm and darkness as the outfit sailed away from shore. The sled was sliding ahead and dragging the poor dogs, who were struggling and falling all over each other trying to keep on their feet, and I was being pulled along after the leader. The situation was desperate. Also we knew there was open water ahead somewhere out there in the darkness, and there was no way to keep from being blown into it. I had given all my dog chains to an Eskimo the day before, as I knew I was going to Nome and could get plenty there. If only I had had them I could have wrapped them around my feet, and they would have helped me to stand up and perhaps to control our direction somewhat. I worked down to the sled, where my companion was now riding the brake, trying to hold the sled: but we had been traveling over bare ground for weeks, and among reindeer herds, necessitating continual use of the brake, so that the prongs had worn dull. We put our combined weight on the brake; but it was of no use — we were sliding along at the same rate of speed. I said nothing about the open water, but I knew Tom was also thinking of it. It was probably only a matter of half an hour more and it would be all over. Once in the icy waters, it would not take long. Finally Tom said: —

“I have so much sand in my boots and down my neck that I for one will certainly never keep afloat long, and it will probably be a good thing. I am only sorry for that poor little girl at home.”

"Well, we might as well hurry up and be a little sorry for ourselves. We have n't much time to spend on it anyway," I said.

Minutes dragged by, and all the time we hoped we might hit a hummock to which we could tie up; but Golovin Bay is usually covered with smooth ice, which does not break up in hummocks as does the ice on the Bering Sea itself. I looked ahead to see when the black streak would appear through the darkness, and thought I saw a light right in the direction in which we were sliding. But I said nothing of my discovery; I was sure I was seeing things, owing to the strain on my eyes in that terrible sand storm.

Not long after Tom shouted, "I see a light!" but on this same trip, when we were fifty miles from the nearest cabin, he kept thinking he could see a light as soon as the afternoon dusk overtook us and camp time approached. So I did not pay much attention to him. Yet I was convinced that I too had seen a light. He shouted once more, "It is surely a light this time!" And so it was. The wind had been more easterly than we had calculated, and had blown us parallel with the open water, and in a few minutes we landed on the beach in Cheenik just where we wanted to be. Once again we had cause to thank our lucky stars that we were still alive.

## XV

### SLUSH EPISODE AND OTHER STORIES

ABOUT Christmas time the next winter I received a telegram from Major John Gotwals, chief engineer of the Alaska Road Commission, saying that he wished me to drive him around to the Kuskokwim and over the Rainy Pass. I had already planned to make a trip from Nome up to Broad Pass, where the new Alaska Railway was being built, and where there was a great deal of travel between the two ends of steel. The railway was being built from Fairbanks to meet the portion which was constructed from Anchorage, and the gap at that time was about one hundred miles. I intended to spend three months carrying passengers and mail, but if I had the opportunity to go with the Major I preferred to do that, as it would take me over country altogether unknown to me. Accordingly I started the day after Christmas, having storms and heavy trails the entire trip. One day I left an Eskimo village called Elim. There was a strong southwester blowing right in from the ocean, and I knew the water on Norton Sound would rise as it always does when it blows from the south for any length of time, so I got an early start, hoping to reach Isaac's Point before the water was so high that I could not land or get off the ice ashore at the Eskimo igloo there. When the water was



high the sea ice rose and floated on the top, but all along the shore the ice froze to the beach and became submerged when high water came. Sometimes there was a stretch several hundred feet wide of this submerged shore ice between the solid sea ice and the land.

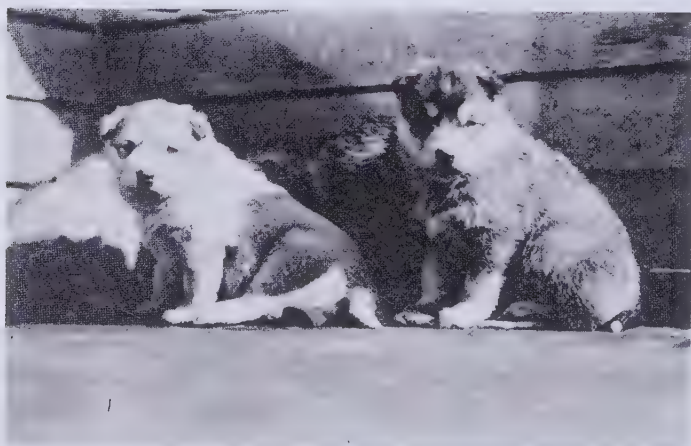
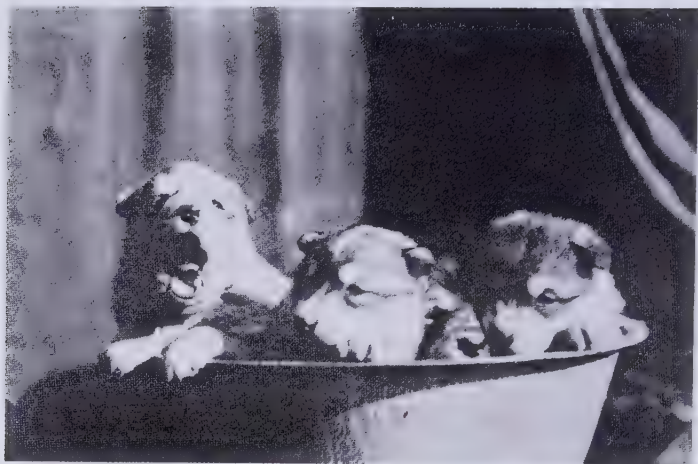
I have spent nights out on the ice, unable to cross. One well acquainted with the region could find places here and there where the water was deep and the ice did not get a chance to freeze to the bottom, but I have traveled as much as fifteen miles to find them. The days were short, not permitting too long a search, and I preferred to keep on the ice rather than take a chance of drowning my dog team and myself. I had to cross a bay eleven miles wide, then follow four miles along the sand spit and hit another bay about fifteen miles inside. The water along the spit was already so high that I preferred to keep out on the ice and not hit the spit, but travel parallel with it. The usual route went to shore at Moses, an abandoned Eskimo village. The natives camped there in summer and put up their winter supplies of fish, which they caught with gill nets and then split and hung up on wooden poles six to eight feet from the ground and sun-dried.

As I traveled along this spit the storm increased, but it was not cold, the weather ranging around zero. It was now snowing, so that I could not see far ahead, and I was traveling by compass. Everything went well, but I was pressing the dogs hard to reach Isaac's Point in time. I had the wind on my side; out on the bay the snow had blown off the ice only in spots, most of the snow being covered with a thin layer of crust. According to my watch

I should have been about five miles offshore, when my dogs began to slow down. I tried to peer ahead through the storm, and it seemed to me that I saw the dogs wallowing; some of them seemed to have sunk down so that I could only see their backs, head, and tail, and all of them were apparently struggling through slush. I stepped off the runner and plunged through a thick crust covering a bottomless mass of slush, and before I knew it I was up to my waist in water. I held on to the sled and pulled myself up, but as I did so the sled also began sinking. The dogs by this time were moving very slowly, most of them being up to their backs and struggling for dear life to keep from drowning. The whole outfit was practically stuck. I tried to get on top of the sled, but as I did so it sank deeper and deeper, although it still kept moving slightly ahead. I shouted at the dogs, but they were already doing all they could to get out.

This was a new experience on the trail for me. I had never seen anything like it. It did not seem possible that there could be a hole in the ice or open water five miles offshore. Surely the ice could not have floated out and the open water be filled with drifting snow over which a thin crust had frozen sufficiently to carry the team for miles, only suddenly to give way. But if what seemed to me impossible was a fact we were in for it, for we kept sinking lower and lower, and eventually the sled and dogs would stop dead and drop out of sight. But I argued with myself that the wind was on shore, so that it was not possible that the ice could drift apart. I could not figure out what caused the open water, and felt baffled. I could

scarcely see Togo over in the lead. At that time I drove him on a twelve-foot extension line, and when he was so far ahead it was hard to see him in the storm. There was not much time for calculating, as my sled was soon out of sight. I was standing on the top of it up to my knees in water, and the poor wheel dogs had a hard time to keep their noses out of the slush. I would have tried to go back, but there was no chance for Togo to turn the team. The dogs were struggling frantically straight ahead, when suddenly the sled came to a stop and I caught sight of Togo scratching hard and yapping to encourage the others to follow, as the crust where he was seemed to be strong enough to support his weight. The only thing I could do was to try and crawl along the towline and get to Togo, so that I could examine the crust. If we could not get the sled on to it I should have to cut the dogs loose and let them shift for themselves. When I stepped off the sled between my dogs I went into water up to my armpits, but I felt no bottom. I kept crawling past one set of dogs after another, and when I reached Togo's extension line I felt something firm under my feet and found that Togo had reached solid ice. He struggled and pulled and barked, but the other dogs were still wallowing, hardly getting anywhere. I took hold with Togo and began to pull, and the team began moving inch by inch. The first set or swing dogs got to solid footing, and that helped, so that after a hard tussle the rest of the team got out; but the wheelers went out of sight before they could reach the ice, and I had to get in once again up to my armpits to lift their heads out. They were nearly dead when I finally



A FAMILY OF SEPPALA'S PUPPIES

saved them. As for myself, my skin trousers were full of water, as well as my mukluks. My parka froze hard, as it was wet to the neck. I loosened my mukluk strings and let out most of the water, but my changes of underwear and socks were all tied up inside of the sled canvas, and that was frozen. As soon as I got the sled out I figured that probably everything was wet and that it was undoubtedly just as well to keep going as long as possible just as I was, without changing. So we got under way. It was not long before we ran across a similar place, but this time the bad part was so short that when my sled sank the lead dogs had already reached good footing.

At Isaac's Point the water was so high that we could not land at the Eskimo igloo, so I had to drive back where the bluff was steepest. There I found it possible to get ashore, but could not take the sled. I turned the dogs loose and we crawled along the foot of the bluff, and two hours afterwards we were in the warm igloo, the dogs kenneled and I in my sleeping bag, while my clothes were drying out by the hot stove. The comfort of the warm cabin and the sleeping bag after my experience soon had me dreaming about riding between ice floes on the back of a walrus escorted by a herd of seals.

On the twenty-fifth day out of Nome I met Major Gotwals at Tanana Hot Springs. We started back down the Yukon, and from Ruby we hit the Inoko Trail, stopping at Inoko and McGrath on the Kuskokwim River, making side trips to the mines in Nixon Forks, and then going back to McGrath. At that time there was a man at death's door at Iditarod. Dr. Beeson of Anchorage had been sent



for, and he was taken over the eight hundred miles by relays of dog teams traveling day and night. When we started out from McGrath, Doctor Beeson was on his way back to his patients at the hospital at Anchorage, and though they had a two days' start on us we caught up with them. The trail was through a narrow canyon. A creek ran through it which had frozen over, later drying up and leaving a covering of ice. The creek was steep and made a series of waterfalls under the ice, and as we drove along the sled would break through and fall from four to eight feet to the bottom, men and dogs going down together, and making it a difficult task to get everything out each time.

It was when we reached the summit that we passed the other teams, and after leaving there we traveled down the southern slope of the Alaskan Range, known to be the heaviest snow belt in Alaska. We all traveled close together, taking turns in leading the way, and one man from each outfit going ahead on snowshoes or skis breaking trail. At Susitna Station the doctor found it necessary for him to continue on through the night, as he was in a hurry to get back to Anchorage. His dogs were pretty well used up by this time, so the Major offered to change teams with him, and I was to take the doctor through. The next day we arrived at Anchorage, making the last lap of what was known as the first relay drive ever undertaken in Alaska.

A little later on we came to an isolated mining camp at the foothills of Mount McKinley. The Major stopped a mile out of camp to examine a mine and told me to drive in to town. I pulled up in front of the small store which was also the roadhouse, and as I did so the keeper came

out to help me with the dogs. As usual, he wanted to know the latest bits of news. At length he said: —

“We heard that man Seppala from Nome was on his way here with the chief engineer of the Road Commission. Have you seen anything of him?”

“Yes,” I said, “I have seen quite a little of him.”

“When do you imagine he will arrive?” he wanted to know.

“He is here now,” I replied.

“Is this the team?”

“Yes.”

“Are you Seppala?”

“Yes.”

His face fell with disappointment. He stepped back a little and began sizing me up from head to heels.

“Well, I’ll be damned! I thought you were a man. How come you are so small?”

I laughed at his frustrated expectations and allowed that I was sorry God Nature had n’t obliged him — or myself either, for that matter!

The Major returned, and we got back to the rail after two weeks of more rough travel and heavy going. We decided to ride on a flat car to Nenana the last twenty-five miles, as the dogs had had such incessant hard sledding. While I was loading the dogs on the car I noticed it had no rail and there was no way in which I could fasten them. Not being used to locomotives and train travel, I was afraid they would try to jump off when the car started. I asked the brakeman whether it would be possible to tie the dogs on the centre of the car. He was a brusque and uncere-

monious individual, and did not seem interested in the least whether they jumped off or not. He merely told me to hurry up and get them on.

"First I want to be sure of some way of fastening them," I said.

"This is no time for arguing. Hurry up and get that outfit on," was his surly reply.

At this point my temper got the best of me. Instead of putting the dogs on the car, I jumped off, pulling the sled and dogs after me. He then seemed to repent his lack of interest and offered to help me reload. In rather forcible language I suggested that he keep out of my way, saying that I could drive to Nenana as fast as that train could travel. He merely shrugged his shoulders and went on with his own loading.

I had my dogs on the line by the time the train started, and we struck out down the tracks after it. The Major was on the rear of the car, and the sight of him, coupled with their enthusiasm to follow this strange contraption, caused the dogs fairly to fly between the rails. It was good going, and I made Nenana in less than two hours. It happened that the train had some trouble in a switch, which delayed it. Hence, true to my statement to the brakeman, I arrived in Nenana as soon as the train! I never saw a more surprised expression on any man's face, and I believe he now had more respect for my dogs and my diminutive self. Years later I was told a delightful story of how I was supposed to have beaten a railroad train with my dog team, which was exaggerated and colored up to astound the ears of the Cheechakos who came afterward. That year my

team covered a greater distance than any in Alaska has ever done so far as is known — for, in addition to traveling from the first snowfall until the last fall in June, I used the dogs as motor power on the Kougarak railway all summer, covering in all approximately seven thousand miles.

Soon afterwards came the 1917 All-Alaska Sweepstakes, which was doomed to be the last of those great races. There were four entries, consisting of Paul Kjegstad, Delzene, Victor Anderson, and myself. The race was run on the ninth of April, and we started one minute apart. In Nome it was not a bad day, but when we passed Cape Nome we could see that a blizzard was lashing Port Safety. The cloud of swirling snow looked like a great wall rising up in the distance, and beyond Safety we could see nothing — not even the mountain peaks were visible over the high bank of snow. We headed into it, and one had the feeling of being literally swallowed by the storm. Delzene was in the lead at the time, while Victor and Paul were behind me. My dogs tangled several times, but I could not leave the sled to adjust things unless I tied up to something, and as soon as I let go of the sled it was blown over and over. As frequently happened during the storms on the trail, I could not see a foot beyond the bow of my sled. At Solomon they reported Delzene had just passed, being fifteen minutes ahead.

Instead of the weather improving, the storm grew worse. It was very cold at the time, but I was wringing wet from the effort of trying to keep my sled right side up and hanging on. Towards Spruce Creek, Victor's leader, Fritz, who was a great dog, came up close to my sled and we traveled

side by side for a long time. I soon found I had a bad tangle in my team, and while I stopped Victor passed me. I followed close on his heels, but only now and then could I see his broad back, although my leader was close up to his sled. Some of my dogs gave me a good deal of trouble, as they were young and tried to break away with the wind and follow the path of least resistance, but again my leader battled hard to keep the right direction. Afterwards an old-timer told us that never in the history of the Sweepstakes had it blown so hard. We were now following the beach at Spruce Creek, where we could not see the houses, although we passed within fifty feet of them. Three miles further we drove out on the ice to get around Topkok Cabin, which was a steep bleak cliff rising perpendicular from the sea. There was great danger at this point that the ice would drift out, but under the steep bluff there were two miles of particularly sheltered traveling, while the usual trail over the mountains would be impossible in that blizzard.

Victor and I were still together when we arrived at the sheltered part of the trail. We could see a team which we knew was Delzene's. We soon caught up with him, and the three of us stayed close to each other until we went ashore at Topkok Cabin, where it was blowing so hard we never saw the cabin at all until our dogs broke open the door, and before we could prevent it they had crowded in. We put them into an old log house which served as a dog kennel. Up till now we had had the storm on the side, but from here on we had to face it, so all three of us decided to stop over until the wind blew itself out or



abated somewhat. Delzene's dogs were mongrels with short fur, and they had suffered from the blizzard, being frozen, and chafed by lines and harness.

From my observations I believed that the race was to be between Victor and myself. Kjegstad did not show up that night, so we could not be sure what had happened to him. The storm kept up all night, but after seven the next day conditions improved. The mail carrier from Council arrived late the day we pulled in at Topkok, and reported the storm impossible to face, as he had had it on his back and it had been all he could do to get through.

At about eight we started, and gradually the weather improved. The rest of the Sweepstakes story is without incident. I was fortunate enough to win my third Sweepstakes in succession, arriving at the finish line four and a half hours ahead of my closest rival.

Whether the war had anything to do with the cessation of the All-Alaska Sweepstakes, or whether there were no teams suitable for competition, I do not know. However, I doubt whether there will ever be a dog race instituted which will so test the mettle of dogs and driver as did the All-Alaska Sweepstakes.

## XVI

### THE BURDEN RACE

ONE of the most amusing races in which I was a contestant was the Solomon Burden Handicap, in which participated the greatest number of dog teams ever recorded in a race to my knowledge. The dogs were handicapped according to the number and weight of the burden and their past records. The previous year there had been a similar race in which I took part, carrying my wife as the burden, and we made the best time. This year my burden was a very light woman, and therefore with my past records I was made the only scratch team out of thirty-odd entries. It was a glorious day in Nome, and we were speeding right along. My partner was very active, and a great help when it was necessary to stop for the purpose of untangling the dogs, or for any purpose requiring the holding of the team, when she could stand on the brake and assist me.

Five miles from Nome we passed a man, a dry-goods merchant, who had lost his wife and team. While he was untangling a mix-up his dogs got away. He was running after them for all there was in him, and when we passed him he was so out of breath he could hardly speak. Later we ran across the team, caught them, and tied them to a drift log on the beach where the dry-goods merchant would eventually find them.

Most of the entrants had borrowed dog teams, and many of them had never even ridden in a dog sled, much less driven one. There were clerks from courthouse and stores, school-teachers, doctors, lawyers, ministers, gamblers, bartenders, miners, and mechanics. A few miles further out we overtook a doctor who was also in a predicament. His wife was sitting in the sled screaming frantically, while the doctor was tangled up among his fighting dogs. While attempting to unsnarl them they got into a fight, and the lines twisted and dangled around his feet so that the more he tried to get out of the tangle the more he was mixed into it. When we pulled up we saw one arm and a leg sticking up among the fighting dogs. He was cursing and swearing, and his wife screaming. There were quarreling dogs on top of him and around him, and as the fourteen animals were surging hither and thither he was dragged along without being able to extricate himself. His wife begged us to help, saying he would be chewed up if we did n't. To be sure, some of the dogs were already about done for. We got him out and started him on his way, but his team was so slow he was soon left far behind.

We had not gone many miles further when we saw a team tied up to a telephone pole. The driver was a sea captain, and his wife the burden. She was standing on the brake in a fine state of excitement. There were four dogs hitched to the sled, while eight of the lead end had broken away. We could see them way out among the ice hummocks of the Bering Sea, thoroughly enjoying themselves, while the long-legged sea captain stumbled among the

rough blocks of ice in hot pursuit. She wanted us to wait until he came back, being sure that a snowstorm would come up, but we assured her the day was one of the best and there was no fear of a blizzard; so, shouting a few words of encouragement, we passed on, for there was now no time to lose.

I hoped that we should not meet any more difficulties, for if we did I saw our chances of winning the race disappearing further and further into obscurity. But sure enough we soon caught up with a school professor and schoolmarm, both out on the trail for the first time. They had borrowed a powerful team of Malemutes, which they had left snubbed to a telephone pole while the professor went up among the dogs to do some readjusting. The lady was sitting in the sled bundled up in furs, with her parka hood pulled well up over her head. When the professor had cut loose from the pole the snub-line had somehow run a slip knot around his leg, and the dogs started before he could get hold of them. His feet were jerked out from under him, and as the team went running along, eager to reach a roadhouse they knew was not far away, the professor dangled behind, with apparently no chance of getting to his feet. He shouted till he was hoarse, but the lady in the sled, with her fur-covered ears, and in the wind which was now blowing fairly hard, never heard his cries, and was riding sublimely along, thinking her professor was on the runners of the sled. As we came up behind them I could see a team, but never noticed the professor until my dogs stepped up beside the sled to go past and I nearly ran on top of the dragging man.

My passenger took my brake while I jumped on to the professor's sled and stopped his team. He was nearly dead when I got him to his feet. Naturally he was furious that his burden had paid no attention to his cries, and she in turn voiced her argument that she had not heard him.

Eventually we arrived at Solomon, in two hours and forty minutes, beating all records, and when the judges were through checking up we were declared the winners by a handsome margin.

There were three hundred and fifty dogs at Solomon that night. As I have said, most of them were borrowed, and the drivers did not know their own dogs or anybody else's, so that the next day there was a grand discussion as to which dogs belonged to whom. One engineer had lost every dog he had, and all he had left was the sled. His dogs had been taken by another driver who could not be sure whether they were his or not. It was said that many of the dogs in the race never reached their right owners again.

The race was full of amusing episodes, but as we were running as a scratch team, and had a succession of incidents along the way, we had to do a good deal of hard driving to make up the lost time.

I believe our record made that day has never yet been broken.

It was at the time of the Sweepstakes that the little gray Siberian who later proved to be my finest leader was born. Because he was so small but such a remarkable animal, I named him Togo, after the Japanese admiral of that name.



Togo was no "newspaper dog"; he accomplished everything for which he was given credit, and a great deal more that was never known to the public. Whenever I raced with Togo in the lead I went in with a sense of security, and I was fortunate in having a dog at the height of his vigor when I was called upon to make the trip to Nulato on the Yukon to get the diphtheria serum and bring it back to Nome. But my faithful little leader was stiffened up in that drive, and was never of any use in the team thereafter.

The Serum Drive may be a subject of much discussion. Since I came "outside" I have continually had to answer questions as to my claim that Togo was the dog who should have received the credit, and not the dog Balto, to whose memory a statue was erected in Central Park, New York. There are two outstanding facts to be mentioned which seem to have confused the public. The first is that, before any relay drive had been decided upon, my team, with Togo as leader, was chosen by the officials to make the entire trip from start to finish; the relay drives were decided upon later. The second is that my team traveled over the ice, roughly speaking, 340 miles in the interest of the serum, while no other team made more than 53 miles at the outside. It was somewhat of a surprise to me to learn that the driver who made the last run with the serum was accorded various contracts for vaudeville and numerous other appearances in the States, and I was amazed and vastly amused that the dog Balto had become a hero.

In Alaska our dogs mean considerably more to us than those "outside" can appreciate, and a slight to them is

as serious a matter to their drivers as if a human being's achievements were overlooked.

On my first trip to the States my attention was called to a newspaper report quoting me as saying that Fox and not Balto was the hero of the drive. I hope I shall never be the man to take away credit from any dog or driver who participated in that run. We all did our best. But when the country was roused to enthusiasm over the Serum Drive I resented the statue to Balto, for if any dog deserved special mention it was Togo.

When the officials asked if I would undertake the mission of going for the serum I culled out from my entire kennel the twenty best dogs for the trip, leaving fourteen. Fox was the best all-round dog remaining there, and he was to serve as temporary leader for the slow work-team I left to do the hauling between the creeks and town. At the time I left I never dreamed that anyone could consider these dogs fit to drive even in a short relay, which was what occurred three days after I was out on the trail. As to the leader, it was up to the driver who happened to be selected to choose any dog he liked, and he chose Balto.

I bred and raised Balto, naming him after a Laplander who accompanied Dr. Nansen when he crossed Greenland in the eighties. I had often tried him, giving him every chance in my fast team, but he could not qualify, so I used him in a slow work-team. After the drive we sold the dogs in the team with Balto to a moving-picture concern in California for a small sum, and Balto for a much higher figure on account of the publicity given to his "glorious achievements."

The Serum Drive "scandal" was known only to a few people who were in Nome at the time, and the driver who was waiting to receive the serum on the last relay was as keen in his resentment at what occurred as any of the rest of us.

I have always considered that when Togo became incapacitated my career as a dog driver was practically at an end, as I have never been able to replace him. Every leader I have had since, no matter how promising an animal, has suffered by comparison. Togo is now pensioned and pampered as becomes his venerable age,<sup>1</sup> and I am satisfied that he is thoroughly content in his new surroundings, and with true canine philosophy has accepted the inevitable. I should like in my last chapter to tell the story of his life.

<sup>1</sup> So he was at the time this was written. Togo has now gone to the happy hunting grounds. He died on December 5, 1929.

## XVII

### TOGO

Togo was born in Little Creek, Alaska, some years after an Englishman, the Honorable Fox Maule Ramsey, had imported the first Siberians, from which pack came most of the Siberian dogs in the North. Captain Roald Amundsen planned to make an expedition to the North Pole, and Jafet Lindeberg, who had acquired some excellent Siberians, was anxious to make Captain Amundsen a present of a dog team to take with him and to be used in exploration. When the war came the project was abandoned and the dogs were turned over to me to raise and train.

Togo first belonged to Victor Anderson, though he was born and raised in my kennels. I remember him as a spoiled pup and hard to handle. Victor grew disgusted with him when he had reached six months or so, and decided to give him to me, considering he was well rid of a difficult and mischievous little puppy. Then I in turn made a present of Togo to a friend who was leaving for the outside and wanted a pet dog. She fixed comfortable quarters for him and occasionally took him in the house, but the more she fed him on T-bone steak the worse his conduct became, and he even snapped at her on various occasions. Not liking the close confinement and being used to roaming over the open tundra at will, he jumped

through her parlor window and like a flash flew back to Little Creek, where he was caught and returned to the lady. He immediately repeated the performance, breaking loose from his chain. House manners did not appeal to Togo, who preferred to live a free life. This time he came back to Little Creek to stay, where he was really very welcome after all, for with his many faults I had missed the little rascal.

As a puppy he took the greatest delight in running along loose beside the big team. But this soon grew to be a nuisance, for he would come chasing past the team and, watching his chance, would take a nip at some dog's ear and get away quickly; or if a strange team was met on the trail, he would promptly jump at the leader, apparently trying to clear the track for me. Once he ran up against a tough team of Malemutes and nearly met his Waterloo. He was chewed up so badly that he had to submit to being hauled home on the sled. Togo hated to ride on anything, though most dogs can easily be trained to ride on the sleds for a rest. This incident, however, served as a great lesson to the ambitious little dog; for it is hard to train a leader to approach, meet, and pass another string. From then on he stayed clear of teams, and later, as he became a leader, he was the best passer I ever had and, remembering his early experience, always gave trail far enough to avoid all tangles and fights. Passing a team going in the same direction, Togo would always do his utmost to get his dogs away from the others — a trait which was of immense value in dog races, for it gave the opponents no chance of hanging on for any length of time. As long as Togo could see them



behind him he would jump into his collar, yelp, and run ahead, and his team mates seemed to understand him.

It was in November that Stevenson and I struck out for Dime Creek with the team. There had been no thought of taking Togo along, as he had not yet been in harness, but I took the added precaution of securing him in the corral, with instructions not to turn him loose for a day or two, as I felt sure the little dog would follow us if possible. That night there was a raging blizzard. Togo had been quiet and showed no outward sign of disappointment at being left behind, but later on when the family were all asleep he apparently decided that the moment had come when he should make a dash for the outside. There was a seven-foot wire fencing all around the corral, and the dog made a jump for it. Though he nearly cleared it, one of his hind legs caught in the meshing of the wire. He was still young enough to squeal like a little pig, and the noise called out the kennel boss to see what was the trouble. Togo was hanging there head down, with the other pups on the inside barking and yelping. The kennel boss cut him loose; but bad as the gash in Togo's leg was, the dog's one idea apparently was to find the team and me. With a final yelp, he raced off, disappearing into the darkness and storm.

We had camped at Solomon that night. The days were short, and we started the next morning before daylight. It was blowing so hard we could see only a faint outline of the team. The dogs struck out with great speed, and I decided there must be a scent of reindeer the way they were going, as a fox or a rabbit would give them a much shorter spurt. At daybreak over the lagoons the wind com-

menced to die down and I saw something ahead which I imagined was a fox. A little further on, though I could scarcely believe it, it was plain that here was no fox, but Togo. He came rushing towards the team, and nipped the leader in the ear. He had traveled all night and slept outside the roadhouse where I was staying, striking out the next morning a long time ahead of the team so that he might get far enough away before we discovered him and could send him back.

I fixed Togo's leg as best I could, having little with which to work — Togo meantime beating his tail against the snow as he found that there was nothing for us to do but admit him as one of the party. The next day, as he ran loose alongside, Togo succeeded in raising havoc with the entire team by chasing a reindeer in a place where there was no chance to hold back the team. When he had chased the deer out of sight he kept on ahead at what he considered a safe distance, probably not being sure what sort of reception he would get after his prank. Meantime I had decided that there was nothing to do but get out an extra harness and give Togo a chance in the team with the older dogs. Once in place, he started off like a veteran, as if he were proud to be at last in the team where he had so often longed to be. As is customary with new dogs, I put him in close to the wheel in order to watch him carefully. He was working harder than any dog in the team, and his efforts were soon rewarded, for we had gone only a few miles when he was taken out and promoted up toward the lead. By the time we pulled in at the mouth of the Koyuk he was actually in the lead beside old Rusty.



TOGO AND HIS CUPS

I was immensely pleased with this new discovery, realizing that I had found a natural-born leader, something I had tried for years to breed — a new leader with great speed and endurance, a puppy only eight months old traveling seventy-five miles his first day in harness and pulling in ahead of the team. From that day on it was Togo who was the favorite and the one who could always be depended upon. Being short-coupled and weighing only forty-eight pounds, the strength and endurance of the dog were remarkable; yet in those early days it was well to be considerate of this infant prodigy, driving him carefully and sparingly and thus building up endurance which later could always be relied on in an emergency.

Togo was nevertheless a trial to his driver in some ways, for he had all the temperament of genius. He was a wonderful cross-country leader, showing a marked ability to keep a straight course, whether it was out on the ice in stormy weather or on the tundras. As long as the trail ran straight the management of Togo was simple, but as soon as we came to a bend he invariably headed for the bank, sometimes impossible to climb with the thick willows and deep snow. He had a mind of his own, and such a keen sense of direction that it was practically impossible to convince him that he could get there just as well by going around the bend. On a circular track the struggle was desperate, as he would always make a bee-line across the track, which he well knew to be the fastest way.

On one occasion, driving out on Bering Sea toward Unalakleet, there was a strong blizzard blowing offshore. The team were traveling slowly, picking their way along the

ice as best they could. Without any warning we came to a crack in the ice which made further advance impossible. The leader realized that we were adrift, and I also realized it and turned the team back again, following the lead and hoping to come to a place where we could cross. Eventually we came to where the crack was narrow. I gave Togo a long line and, his light weight being an advantage, picked him up in my arms and tossed him over the lead. Now it seemed as if we were out of our predicament, for Togo could give a strong pull on the solid ice and start the team over. He braced himself to make the pull, but with a disastrous result, for his line broke and Togo was left on the land side. The lead between us kept on widening: we drove along looking for escape, and Togo followed as best he could on the opposite side. It was twenty-five below and blowing so hard that it must have been almost impossible for the dog to see us at all at times. He followed the edge of the ice, and when the opening was about two hundred yards wide he apparently lost sight of us. As if he realized he must take the one desperate chance left to get back to his driver and team, he jumped into the icy water and swam as hard as he could, coming like a little submarine with the wind, soon catching up with us. I grabbed him by the neck and pulled him out. Togo, in his excitement at being again with his team mates, rolled over and over in the snow and slush — with the result that the snow stuck to his fur, and the wind immediately froze it. Togo had a habit of lifting his paw whenever he wanted to convey the idea that he was asking a favor, and this time he tried the same signal, but could scarcely lift his paw from the



ground, as the ice all over him had frozen so solid. I tried my best to remove some of it as quickly as possible, but, as if Togo realized there was no time to lose, he shook himself as best he could, and ran up to his place in the lead for me to hook him in. More like a polar bear cub than a dog, he struck out once more as if nothing had happened.

Toward morning we found a place where the floe was pivoting against the land ice, close enough so that Togo could lead the team to safety by jumping from one bobbing ice-cake to another. It was a bad time for us all, but we somehow managed to pull out of it, none the worse for the experience.

About Christmas time, 1924, a doctor was called to see my little daughter, who was suffering from a sore throat. The doctor did not seem to think it very serious, and by following his instructions she soon recovered. A little later on, in January, another child died in Nome, and the cause of her death was diagnosed as diphtheria. It was not long before others were affected, and it was then that the Chairman of the Board of Health came to me asking if I would go out over the trail and bring back the diphtheria serum which was essential if we were to combat the disease. More children were being affected every day.

I told the Commissioner that I should be glad to go if the authorities felt there was no better team. He added that they hoped to use airplanes, but if the airplanes failed word would be sent to me at once so that we should have time to make the run to Nulato in short mail-trip drives, hardening the dogs up gradually. I was told to be ready to start at a moment's notice, and with these instructions I

went back to Little Creek to await developments. There had been very little snow that winter and I had not driven as much as usual, so I immediately set to work exercising the dogs and getting them into condition. Every time the telephone rang the dogs would hear it in the kennels and all tune up in an expectant howl, but as the hours passed it looked as if they might not be needed after all.

Then one morning about six o'clock there was a long persistent ringing in the cabin, and the whole kennel responded in husky chorus. They must have had their eyes on the cabin hopefully, for when I appeared, dressed for the trail, there broke loose in the kennel such excitement as I have never seen equalled, except perhaps at the time of the Sweepstakes.

The Commissioner had asked me to get off without delay. He explained that such serum as they had was several years old, and with the epidemic steadily increasing they were in dire need of a new supply. I singled the dogs out one by one; naturally not one wanted to be left behind. Twenty were chosen. I planned to drop some of them off along the way, to be cared for at Eskimo igloos until the return trip, when we could substitute the fresh dogs for the tired ones. Also, if any of them showed any signs of weakness or sore feet, they would have a chance to rest up and be in good condition for the home stretch. I intended to leave twelve dogs by the way, arriving in Nulato with a team of eight. I should hardly need more, as I was told the package containing the serum was very light. With fresh reënforcement on the way back I should be able to drive day and night. Thus I picked out the

twenty best dogs, though at the time all were on their best behavior, raising their paws politely and pleading to be taken. A dog named Fox was left as leader for the cull team, which was to continue hauling supplies during our absence and was composed of dogs too slow to be of much use in a fast run.

The people of Nome gave us a great send-off. They knew it was a long, hazardous trip, and they realized what a word of encouragement would mean. The first day we made about thirty-three miles, and from then on the team warmed up to the work and averaged fifty miles and over every day. We passed two villages where there were government schools for Eskimo children, and I told the teachers about the epidemic, advising them to close the school, to keep the children in quarantine, and away from people passing from Nome.

We were lucky in having favorable weather, and the trails were at their best. According to plan, some of the dogs were left along the way to be cared for while the rest of us pushed on. On the third day we arrived at Isaac's Point, where we stopped with an Eskimo family, having covered a hundred and thirty miles since leaving Nome. The next day we started off for Shaktolik, a native village on the south side of the Bay. It was late by the time we set out over the ice of Norton Bay. We could see it was blowing hard out on the Bay, and with the north wind at our backs we were sure to make good time. The team would deserve a good rest at the end of the day, and surely I should welcome it as well as the dogs. Having crossed the ice, and being just in sight of our destination for the day, we

scented another dog team and struck out with a great spurt. As we came up I could see that the driver was busy refereeing a dog fight. With a word of greeting to the man, I was about to pass by when he called to me. In the wind, and with my parka hood up over my ears, I got only three words: "serum — turn back." I thought I must have misunderstood, but when I looked back over my shoulder I saw the other driver waving his arm. I called to Togo to "gee," but he could n't. The other dogs were still on the spurt, and I had to run about a mile further on before I could slow the team down and turn them. We came to a stretch of hard snow, where I was able to get the dogs under control. Though they hated to, they followed Togo. When we reached the other team a package was tossed into my sled and the stranger handed me a paper which proved to be the instructions accompanying the serum. The young dogs in my team began acting disgracefully, wanting to pick a quarrel with the strange team. Their driver explained that after I had passed out of telephone communication the epidemic had increased so alarmingly that the officials had decided to speed the serum by short relays running night and day. Thus I had reached the serum after traveling only a hundred and seventy miles, instead of the three hundred for which I had originally planned.

We had had a hard day, covering forty-three miles with the wind at our backs. But the return was even harder. The gale was in our faces, the temperature was thirty below, and we had the forty-three miles to do over again in the dark. There was nothing for it but to face the music. The dogs did their best, and I drove as if we were in a race. The

ice of Norton Sound is notoriously treacherous: it has a habit of shifting and breaking up, so that before travelers know it they have gone for miles on a loose ice-cake with open water on all sides, slowly but surely being blown out into the Bering Sea.

In spite of these unpleasant prospects, we managed to reach Isaac's Point, and after a drive of nearly ninety miles the team were grateful for a brief rest in a comfortable kennel. They were wild for their rations of salmon and seal blubber. After they were fed I went into the igloo and read over the instructions. They called for the serum to be warmed up at each station. Accordingly I pulled the sled inside, and undid the fur and canvas wrapped around the package. I found the serum was sealed up in paper cartons, and as I saw nothing about breaking the seals I instructed the Eskimo to make the igloo good and hot and left the package exposed to the heat. As I looked it over and felt of it I was convinced that if it was a liquid it must have been frozen in the severe cold, though we had protected it as well as possible. I doubted if the heat could penetrate the paper cartons, but I had taken off the last wrapping which I was authorized to touch.

When I had allowed as much time as we could spare I came out to the dogs and began putting them back on the line. An old Eskimo stood by as we hitched up, and observing the increase in the wind he cautioned me: "Maybe ice not much good. Maybe breaking off and go out. Old trail plenty no good. Maybe you go more closer shore." I thanked him and followed his suggestion, taking a trail further in. At that, we came within a few feet of open



water, as the trail over which we had traveled only the day before had broken off and drifted far out into Bering Sea.

During the afternoon we pulled into Cheenik Village, where another driver was waiting with his relay team. We had traveled in all three hundred and forty miles in the interest of the serum. No other relay made more than fifty-three miles. After delivering the package to the driver at Cheenik, a tired driver and tired dogs all had a good rest until the next day, when we drove to Solomon and then on into Nome. When we arrived there the whole town seemed to be out to meet us. It was like the winner's reception after a Sweepstakes race.

News of the diphtheria had found its way to the outside papers, and in the States the teams were being followed from day to day by the press. They had become heroes while they were peacefully going on their way, totally unconscious that they were headliners in the press. The last relay team landed the serum in Nome at six o'clock on the morning of the second of February, 1925. It was frozen, as I had suspected, but the Surgeon General in Washington advised using it just the same.

There was plenty of scandal connected with the drive, and there were many rumors as to various individuals commercializing it. The chief thing which disturbed me was that Togo's records were given to Balto, a scrub dog, who was pushed into the limelight and made immortal. It was almost more than I could bear when the "newspaper" dog Balto received a statue for his "glorious achievements," decked out in Togo's colors, and with the claim that he

had taken Amundsen to Point Barrow and part way to the Pole — when he had never been two hundred miles north of Nome! By giving him Togo's records he was established as "the greatest racing leader in Alaska," when he was never in a winning team! I know, because I owned and raised Balto, as well as Togo.

The Serum Drive was Togo's last long run. In that drive he had worked his hardest and best. I appreciated this, and tried to take the best possible care of the old dog. Togo, in his sixteenth year, seemed content to rest on his laurels. He even posed without fuss for a photograph with his cups and trophies, perhaps imagining himself as he was in the old days. It seemed best to leave him where he could be pensioned and enjoy a well-earned rest. But it was a sad parting on a cold gray March morning when Togo raised a small paw to my knee as if questioning why he was not going along with me. For the first time in twelve years I hit the trail without Togo.













